Tibet in Pictures

Volume 2
Expedition to Western Tibet

Text and Photos by
Li Gotami Govinda

Dharma Publishing

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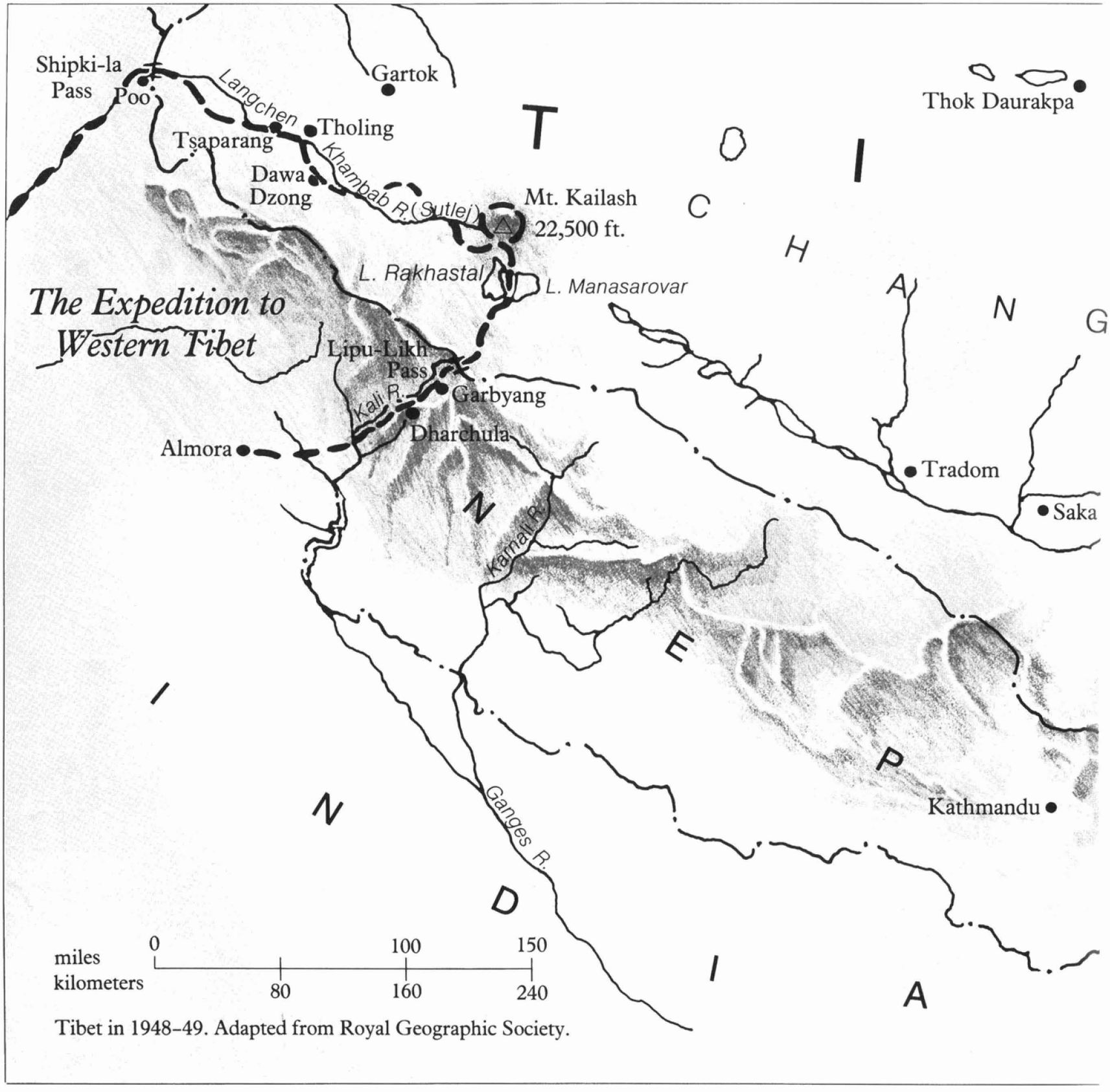
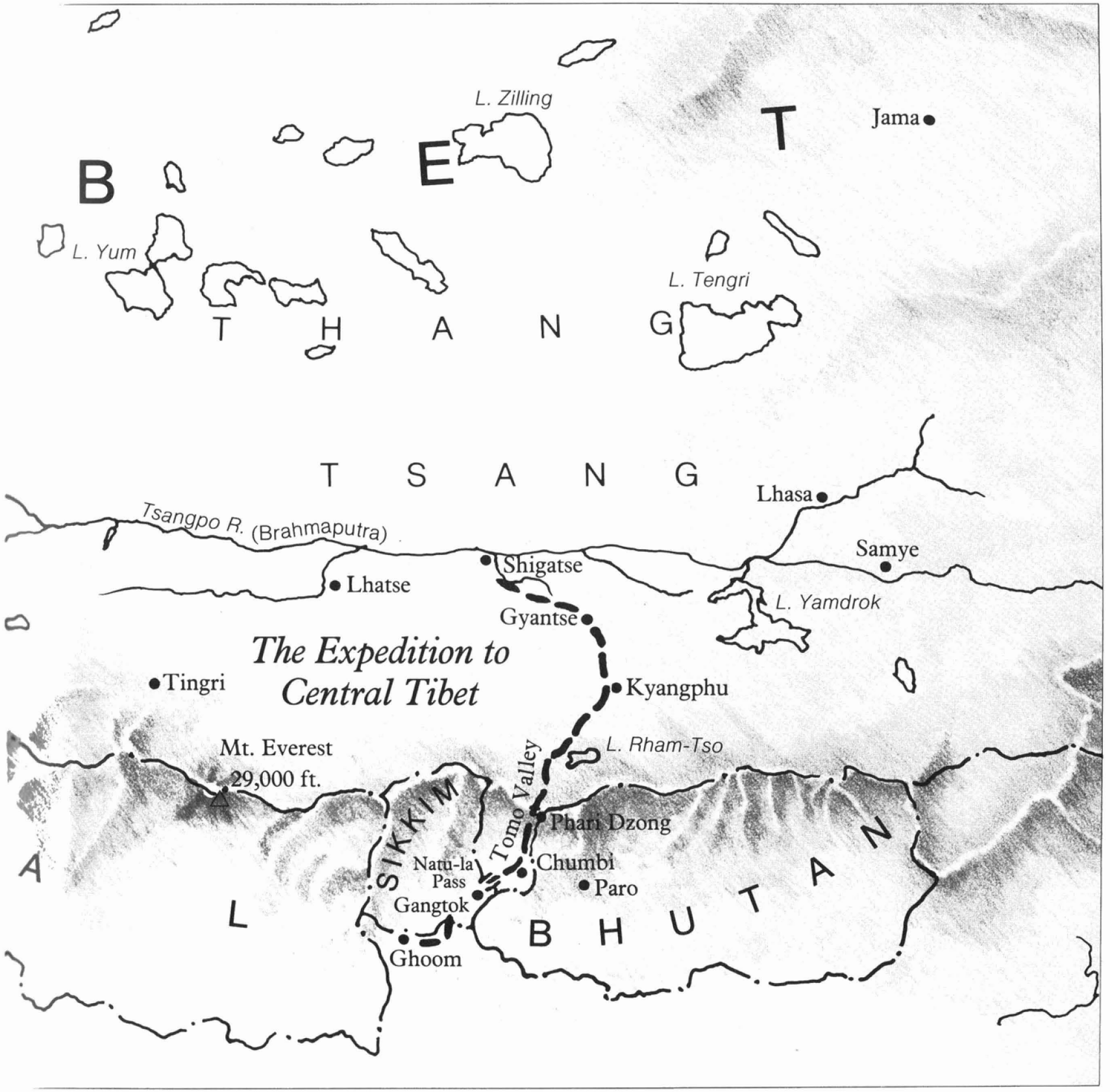
To Kiän
(Lama Anagarika Govinda)
in undying memory
of our journeys into the
Land of the Thousand Buddhas



Tibet in 1948–49. Adapted from Royal Geographic Society.

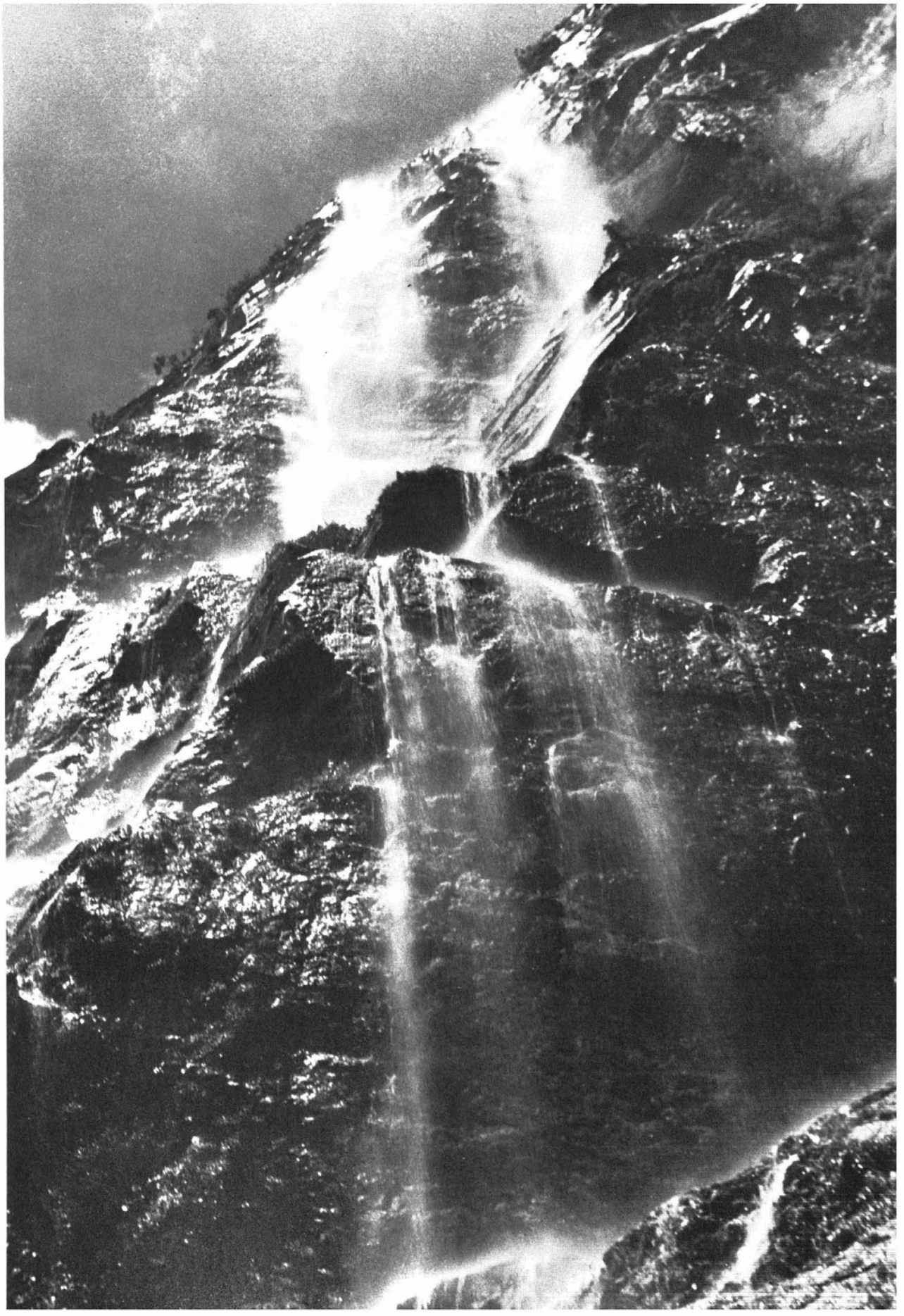

L. Zilling
Jama
B E T
L. Yum
L. Tengri
T H A N G
T S A N G
Lhasa
Tsangpo R. (Brahmaputra)
Samye
Shigatse
Lhatse
L. Yamdrok
Gyantse
The Expedition to Central Tibet
Tingri
Kyangphu
Mt. Everest 29,000 ft.
L. Rham-Tso
Tomo Valley
Phari Dzong
SIKKIM
Natu-la Pass
Chumbi
Paro
Gangtok
Ghoom
A L
B H U T A N

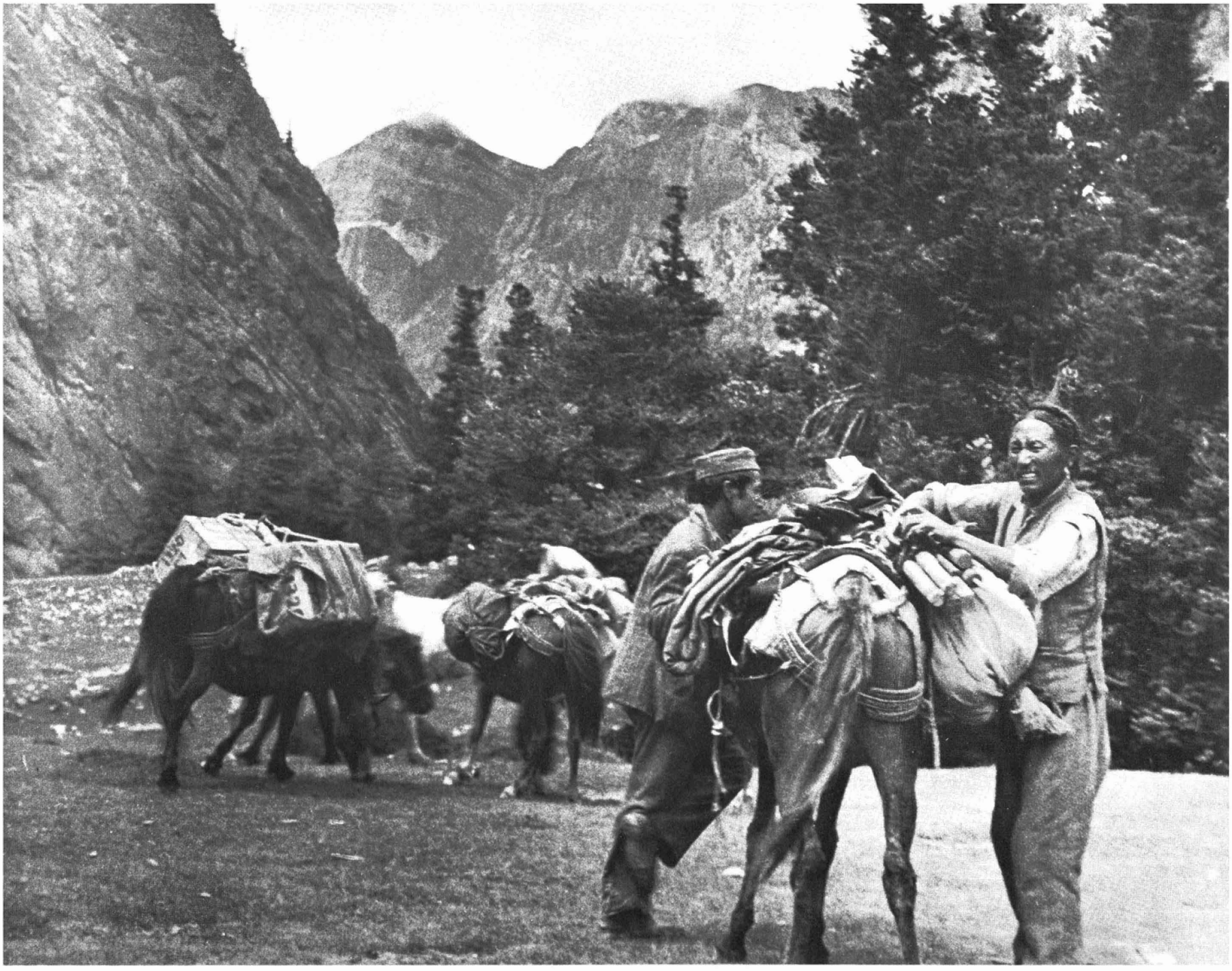
Crossing The Kali River In The Himalayas
Kumaon, Himalayas

As there are no bridges, one is strapped to a triangular wooden frame and then pulled across the wild and roaring Kali River by a rope made of dried reeds. If the rope snapped, it would mean certain death. Two of the men in the foreground made the crossing unaided. The fury of this river must be seen and heard to be believed!

A Waterfall In The
Kali River Gorge
Kumaon, Himalayas

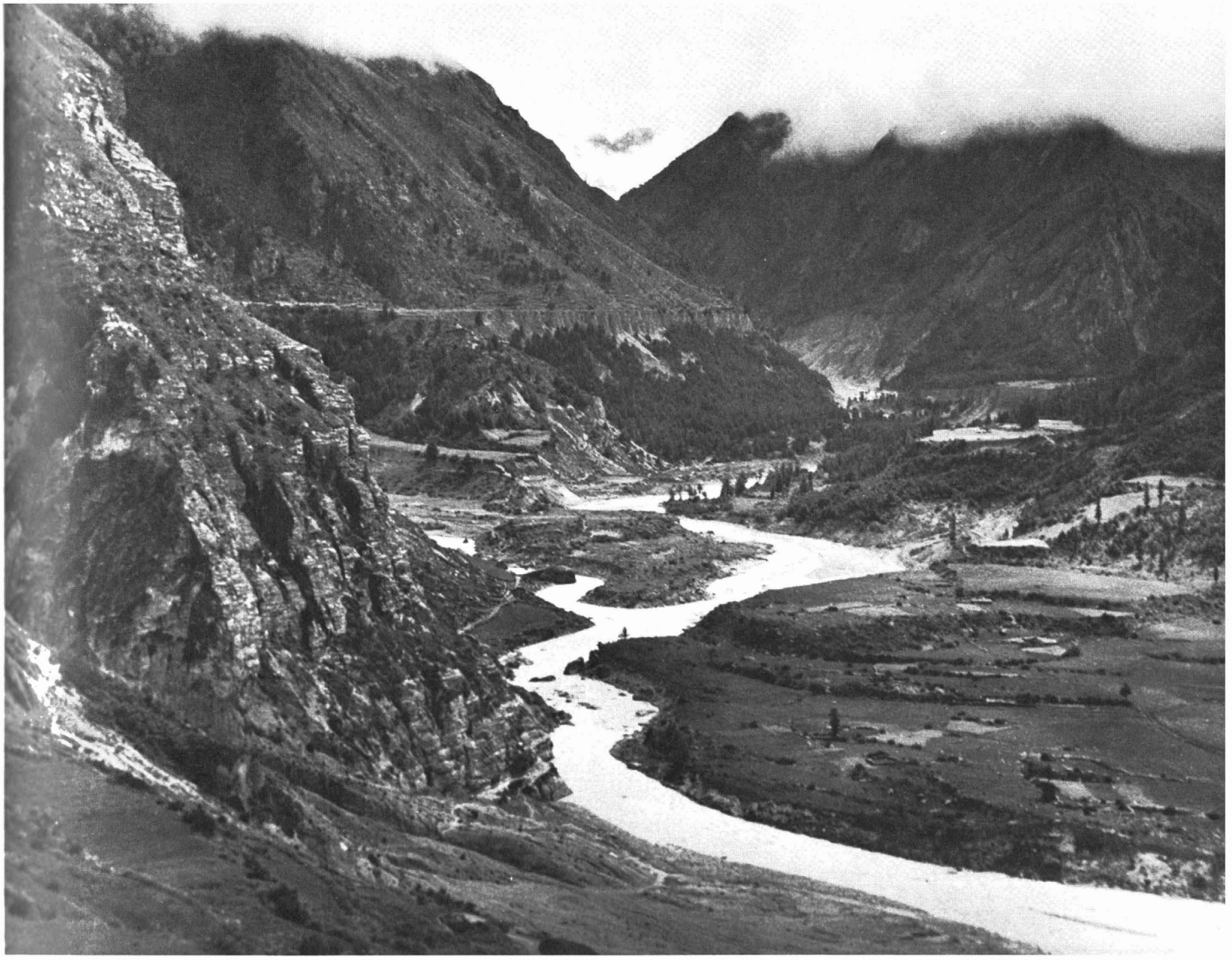
When crossing the Himalayas, one has to pass through many narrow gorges. Giant waterfalls course down from great heights, and are sometimes crossed on stones covered with wet, slippery moss. Stones rolling down from invisible heights constitute one of the greatest dangers of Tibetan treks.





LOADING THE CARAVAN NEAR GARBYANG
Back of the Himalayan Range

From Dharchula up to Garbyang, one must travel on foot, for no horse could cross the wild mountain rivers. But from Garbyang onwards, it is again possible to travel on horseback. The picture shows our pack animals being loaded securely with the tents, camp-cots, and food boxes that are necessary along the route. The ponies and working horses are cared for with great consideration, and their loads are meticulously weighed.

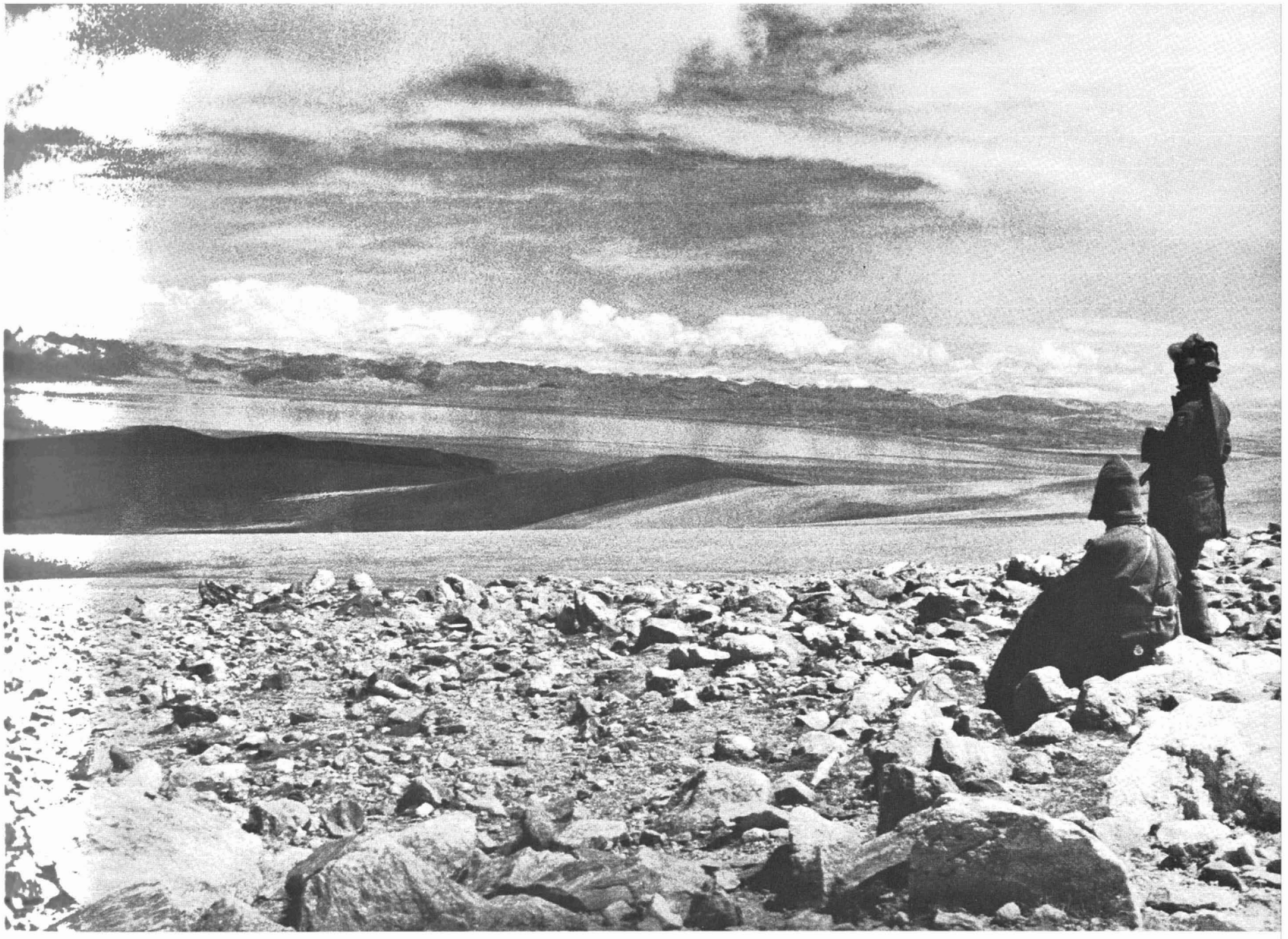


THE VALLEY OF GARBYANG WITH KALI RIVER
Back of the Himalayan Range

The Kali River forms the frontier between India and Nepal. Here it flows quietly through the valley of Garbyang; in some of the gorges, lower down, it gathers immense speed and fury.

Lama Govinda Performing Pūja
At The Shores Of Lake Manasarovar
Western Tibet

Our first *pūja* in the region of Mount Kailash was performed on the shore of the sacred Lake Manasarovar. The rough cairn was erected by a Tibetan lady known as Momo Thuku, to commemorate the spot where part of the ashes of Mahatma Gandhi (brought from India to Tibet) were immersed in its sacred waters.

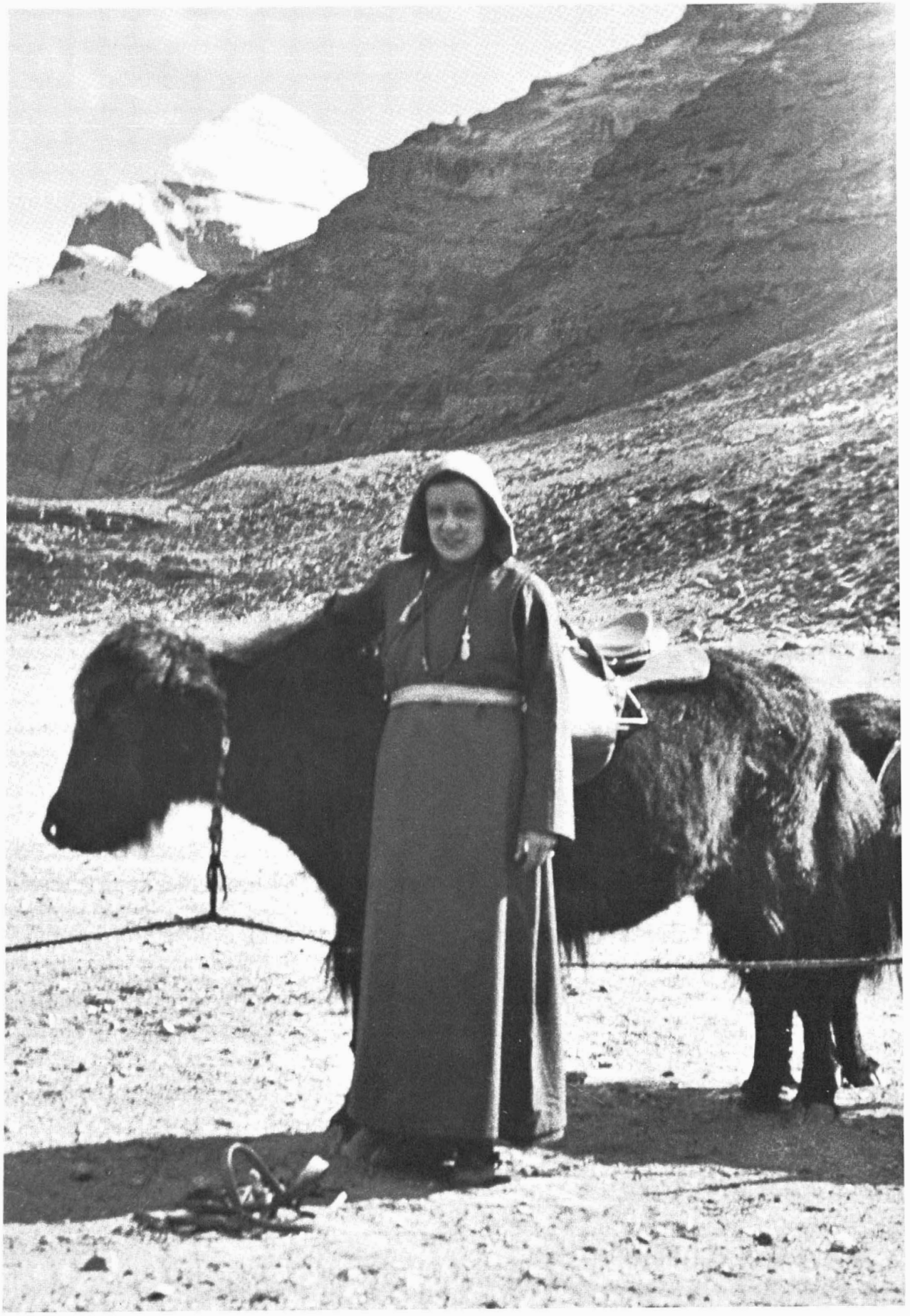


A View Of Lake Manasarovar
Western Tibet

A view from near the Gurla Mandata Pass of the tableland of Tibet. The Manasarovar Lake lies silent and still, beautiful to look at, so peace-giving to every pilgrim. This lake is sacred to both Buddhists and Hindus, and pilgrims carry back its waters, in bottles and jars, for it is believed to cure all illnesses.

Camp At The Foot Of Gurla Mandata
Western Tibet

We camped for some days at the foot of the Gurla Mandata Range, near the shores of the sacred Lake Manasarovar, enjoying the peace and quiet this region emanates. The altitude was about fifteen thousand feet above sea level. The lake's colors seemed to change magically from hour to hour, while in the distance beyond the lake stood the azure, snow-capped Kailash range (not visible in the picture). The animals of this region—the marmots, hares, and the small black bobtailed birds—were all very friendly.

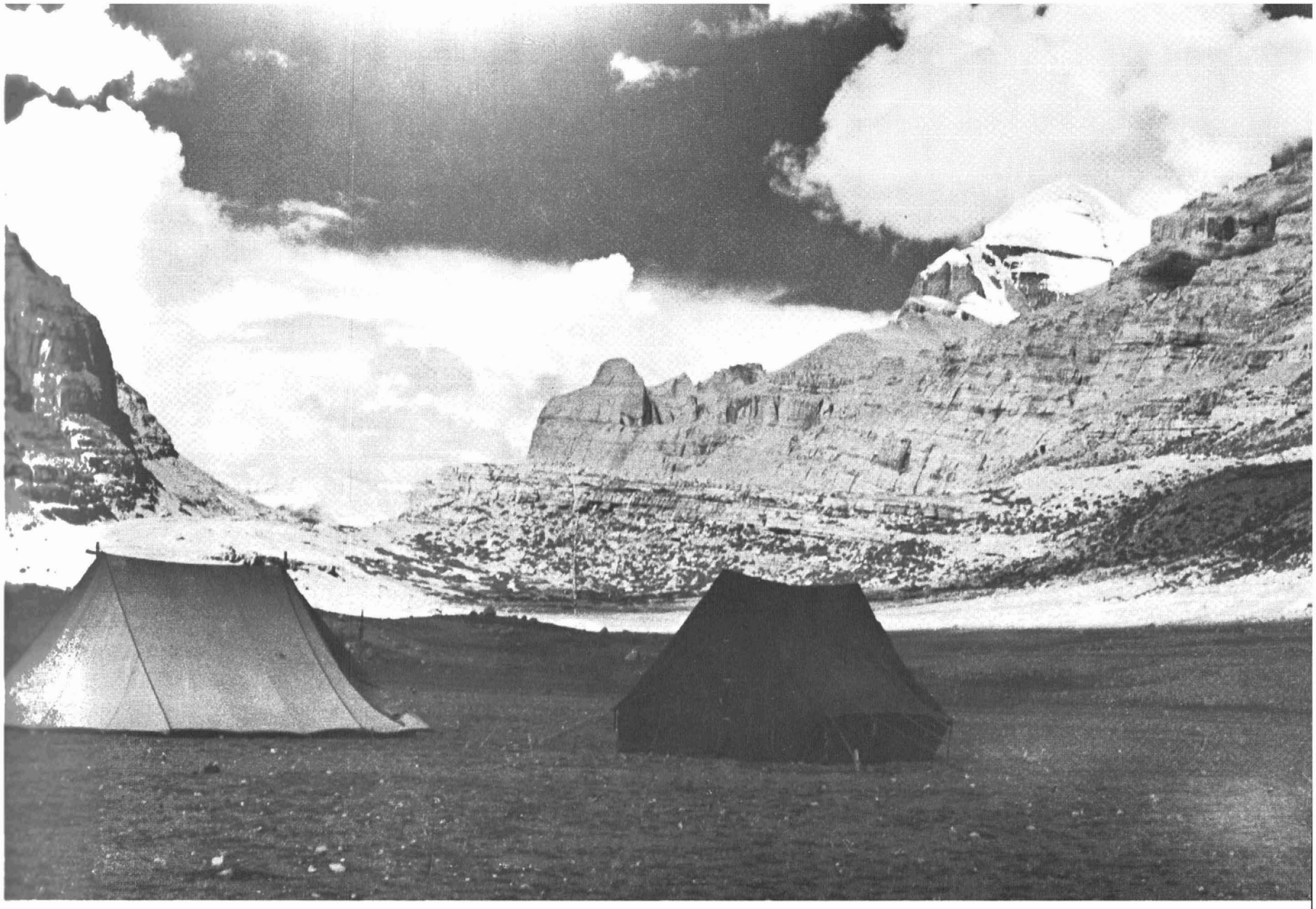


The Author Along The
Kailash Parikrama
Western Tibet

Note the saddle on my yak, which I brought from India. I saddled my yak as we are used to saddle a horse for riding, but this was just to give myself a feeling of safety! Yaks go just where they want to, and take no notice whatsoever of riders or reins. Their spacious backs actually make them very comfortable to ride, and they go slowly.

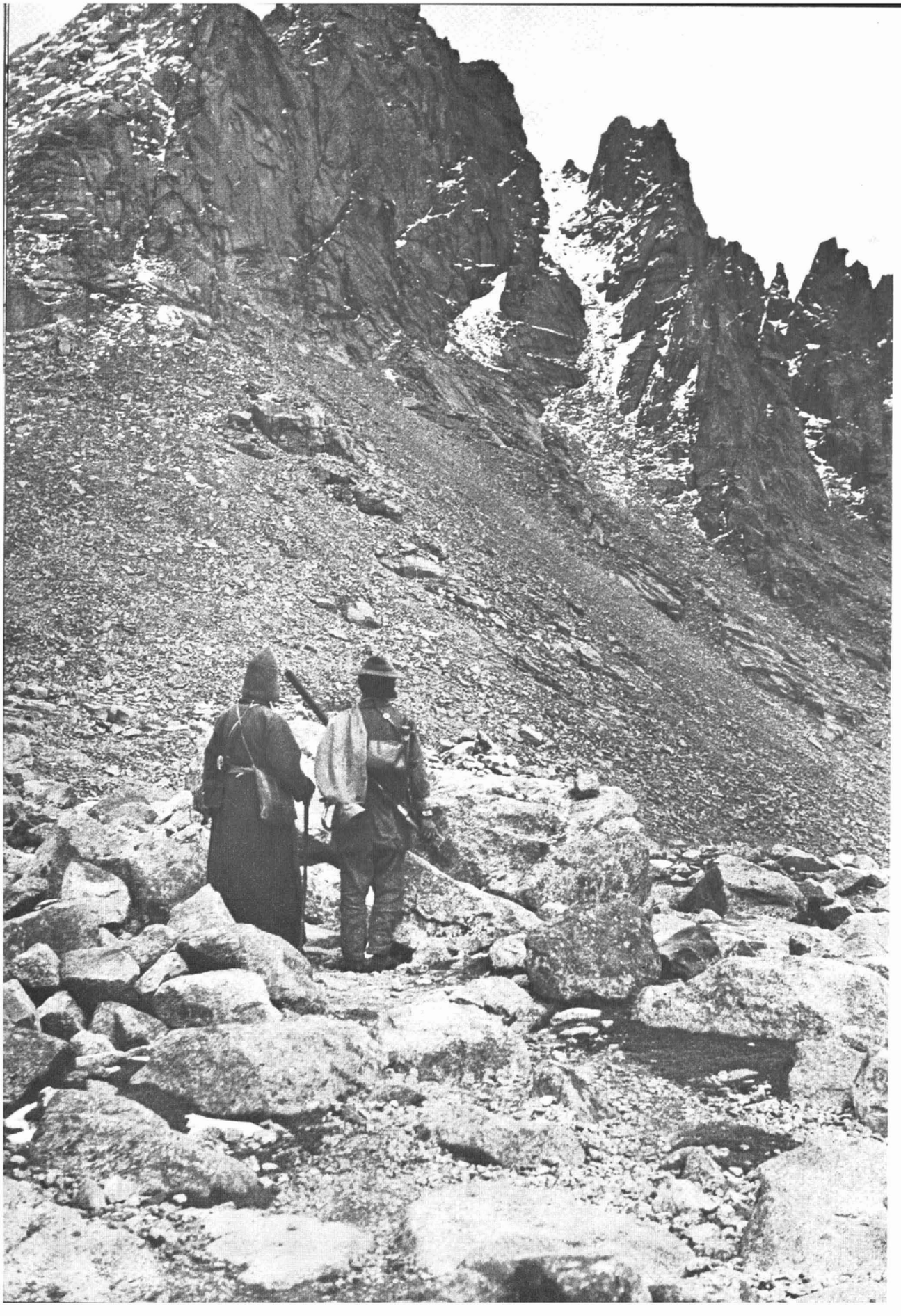
KHAMBA PILGRIMS ALONG THE KAILASH PARIKRAMA
Western Tibet

Like us, these two pilgrims from Kham Province in Eastern Tibet were circumambulating the holy mountain. To make this pilgrimage, these people must have journeyed about two thousand kilometers on foot—from Eastern Tibet, across almost the whole country, to Mount Kailash in Western Tibet. Such a journey would have required at least three months of travel (from dawn to noon).



CAMP ALONGSIDE THE KAILASH PARIKRAMA
Western Tibet

Mount Kailash, the precious Snow-Jewel of the Buddhists, the holy abode of countless Buddhas, forms the spire of the 'Roof of the World.' Identified with Mount Meru according to the oldest Sanskrit tradition, it is regarded as not only the physical, but also the metaphysical center of the universe. It is customary for pilgrims to make a ritual circumambulation (called *parikrama*) of the sacred mountain, a three- or four-day journey. We took all our animals with us, *unloaded*, since their owners wanted them to partake of the merit, which would allow them to be reborn as human beings. Before starting out, we rested in the western valley at the foot of the mountain. Its snowy peak is seen in the right background of the picture.



En Route Dolma Pass,
Kailash Parikrama
Western Tibet

Shortly before crossing the Dolma-la, the highest pass along the circumambulation route of Mount Kailash (at nearly nineteen thousand feet above sea level), Lama Govinda and our guide headed the caravan. Our guide carried a gun as protection against robbers, who sometimes waylaid pilgrims along the route.

On The Dolma Pass At 18,500 Feet
Western Tibet

The highest pass along the circumambulation route of Mount Kailash is dedicated to Dolma, the Madonnalike Tārā of Tibet. This was the most beautiful part of the entire circumambulation. Although breathing and walking became difficult because of the altitude, there was a strange nearness to things, as if a thin, misty veil standing between us and the world had miraculously fallen away. Note the yaks enjoying the snow; they lapped it up like ice cream! We had no oxygen with us, but were given sugar cones to suck. This helps a lot.

TIBETAN NOMAD COUPLE
Western Tibet

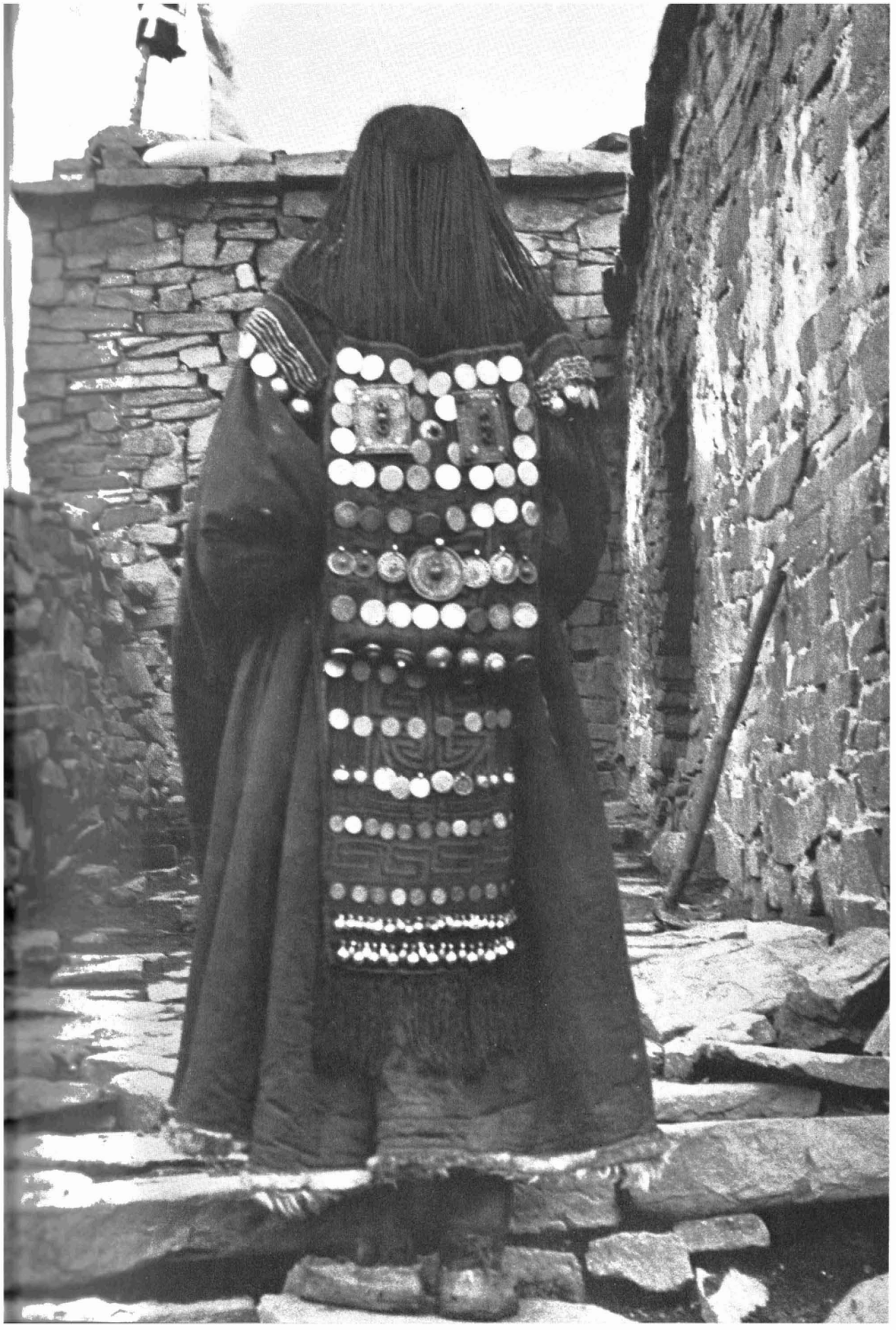
Tibetan nomads of Western Tibet live in the Chang Thang, a huge plateau at an average altitude of thirteen thousand feet above sea level. They wear roughly-made coats of sheepskin, with the wool next to the skin, and dwell in tents made of woven yak hair. In the vast, sparsely inhabited highland of Tibet, they graze herds of yak and sheep. These animals are their only possessions and their only means of livelihood, since little can grow at the high altitude. They are armed with swords and daggers to protect themselves against robbers and the hostile tribes that invaded northwestern Tibet some years ago.

COLLECTING TIBETAN MEDICINAL POWDER
Kailash Region, Western Tibet

Our guide is here seen collecting some powder for medicinal purposes. Tibetans believe that illness is caused by both mental and physical imbalances, and that only a change in mental perspective will effect a lasting cure. They therefore use a large variety of mineral and herbal remedies (similar to Western homeopathic or naturopathic remedies), which are said to affect the mind as well as the body.

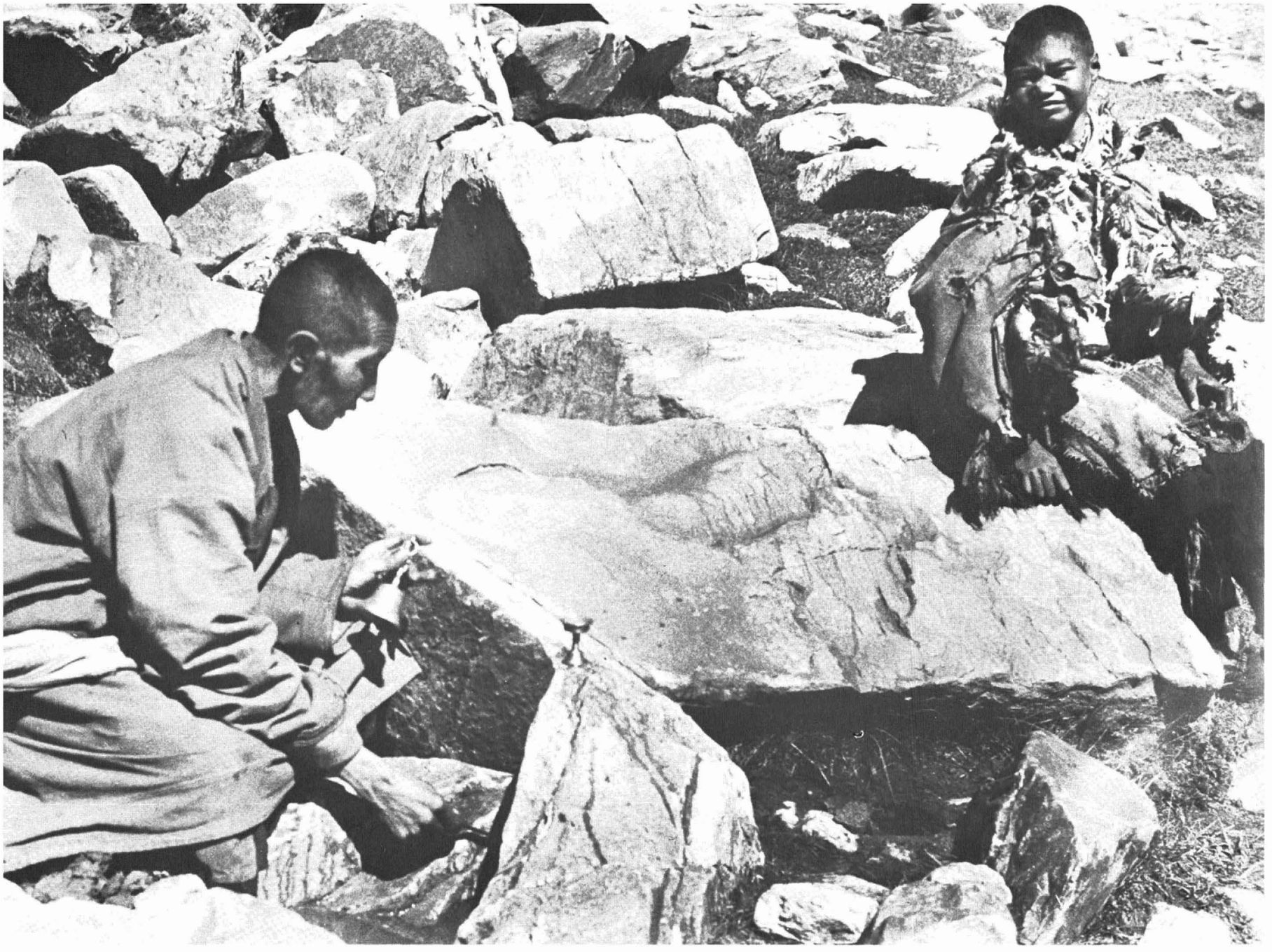
TIBETAN BELLE OF DZUNDLE-PHUK
Kailash Region

This Tibetan belle of the Kailash Region (about sixteen thousand feet above sea level) has her hair plaited in the traditional one hundred and eight plaits. Her thick coat is lined with fur to keep her warm in winter. Her sunny smile is typical of all Tibetan people. Conditions might be rigorous according to Western standards, but the inconvenience affects everyone alike and evokes a deep sense of social unity and spontaneous friendliness among the people.



Coin Ornaments Worn At Back
Dzundle-Phuk

The nomadic women of Western Tibet always carry their entire wealth on their person. This is how they do it. A colorfully decorative length of fringed woolen cloth is sewn to the plaits of hair and left hanging down the back. On to this is sewn their treasure of coins, charm-boxes, silver bells, and other valuables, which can then be carried wherever they go. If these valuables were left in tents, they would very likely be stolen by brigands. Coins and beads are also worn in the hair.



PRAYERS AT A MOUNTAIN SPRING
Western Tibet

This lama performed his morning prayers while the caravan rested near a waterhole. The beggar girl was a nun; hence, the shaven head. She apparently belonged to no nunnery, for she attached herself to our caravan.

THE ABBOT OF GURUGEM BONPA MONASTERY
Western Tibet

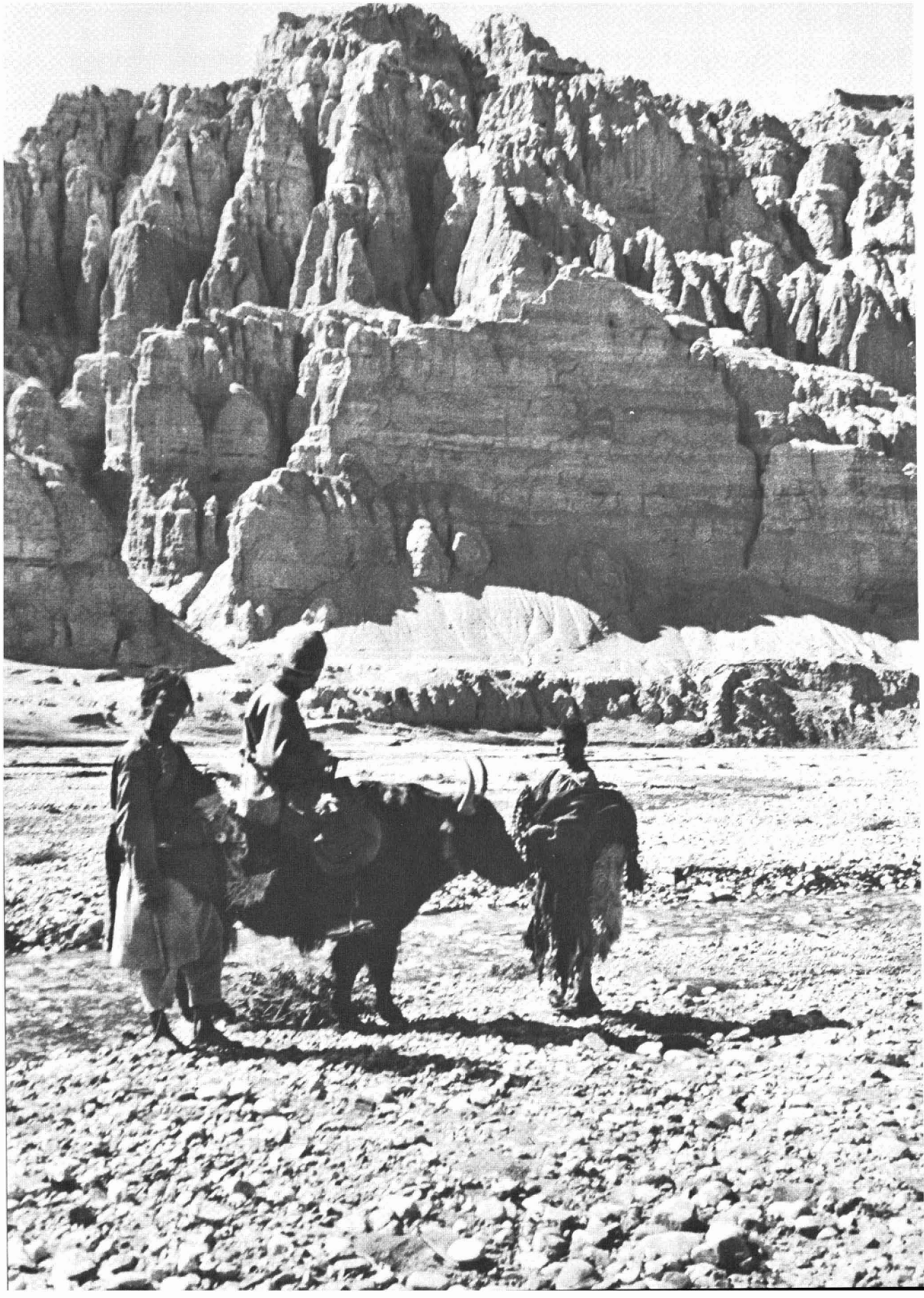
We camped at Gurugem, a Bonpa monastery, in order to procure a fresh set of yaks for further transport. Our caravan drivers wished to return with their animals to the Indian frontier, where we had hired the caravan. This abbot helped us to obtain fresh animals for the next stage at reasonable prices. Bon was the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, a shamanistic nature cult. A number of fierce Bon deities were magically defeated in the eighth century by Padmasambhava, and accepted into the Buddhist pantheon as protectors of the faith.

NOMAD CAMP NEAR GYANIMAMANDI
Western Tibet

This caravan had camped for rest and food alongside a river. Since the altitude in most of Tibet is too high for farming, herdsmen and wandering nomads follow the seasons from pasture to pasture, grazing their yaks, sheep, goats, and horses in the green but often sparse tableland.

TIBETAN BANDIT
Western Tibet

Tibetan bandits or *dacoits* are sometimes met during long and lonely treks. They travel on horseback, carrying old-fashioned muzzle-guns with forked supports. Since they have no sheep or luggage ponies, they cover a considerable distance with the booty before they can be overtaken and caught. They do not always attack. We encountered this *dacoit* while passing through a vast track of lonely territory in Western Tibet.

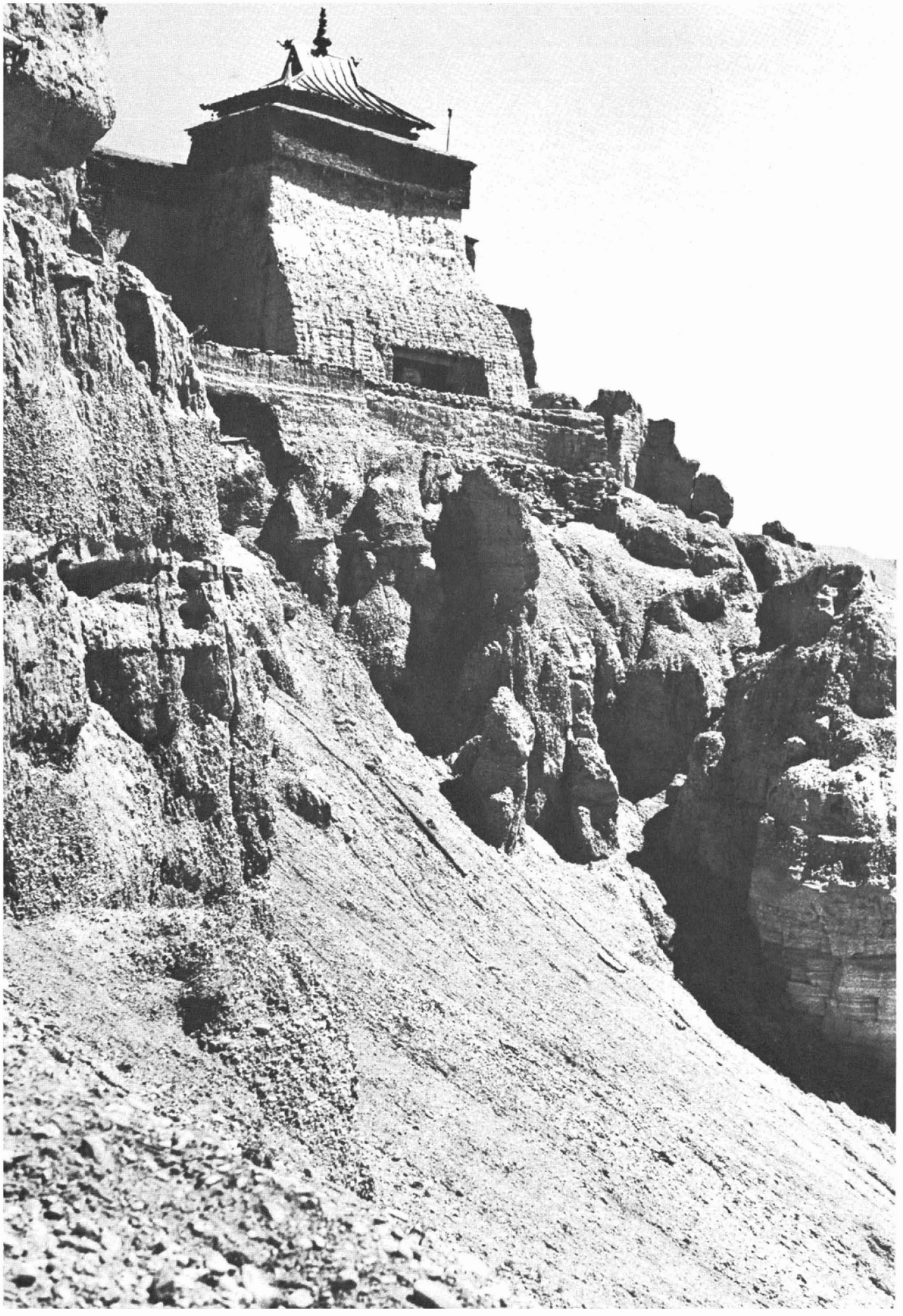


En Route Dawa Dzong
Western Tibet

The way to Dawa Dzong (the Valley of the Moon Castle) was surrounded by fantastic rock formations. The strangely shaped crags and hills appeared like visions in a dream, like some landscape on another planet, perhaps the moon!

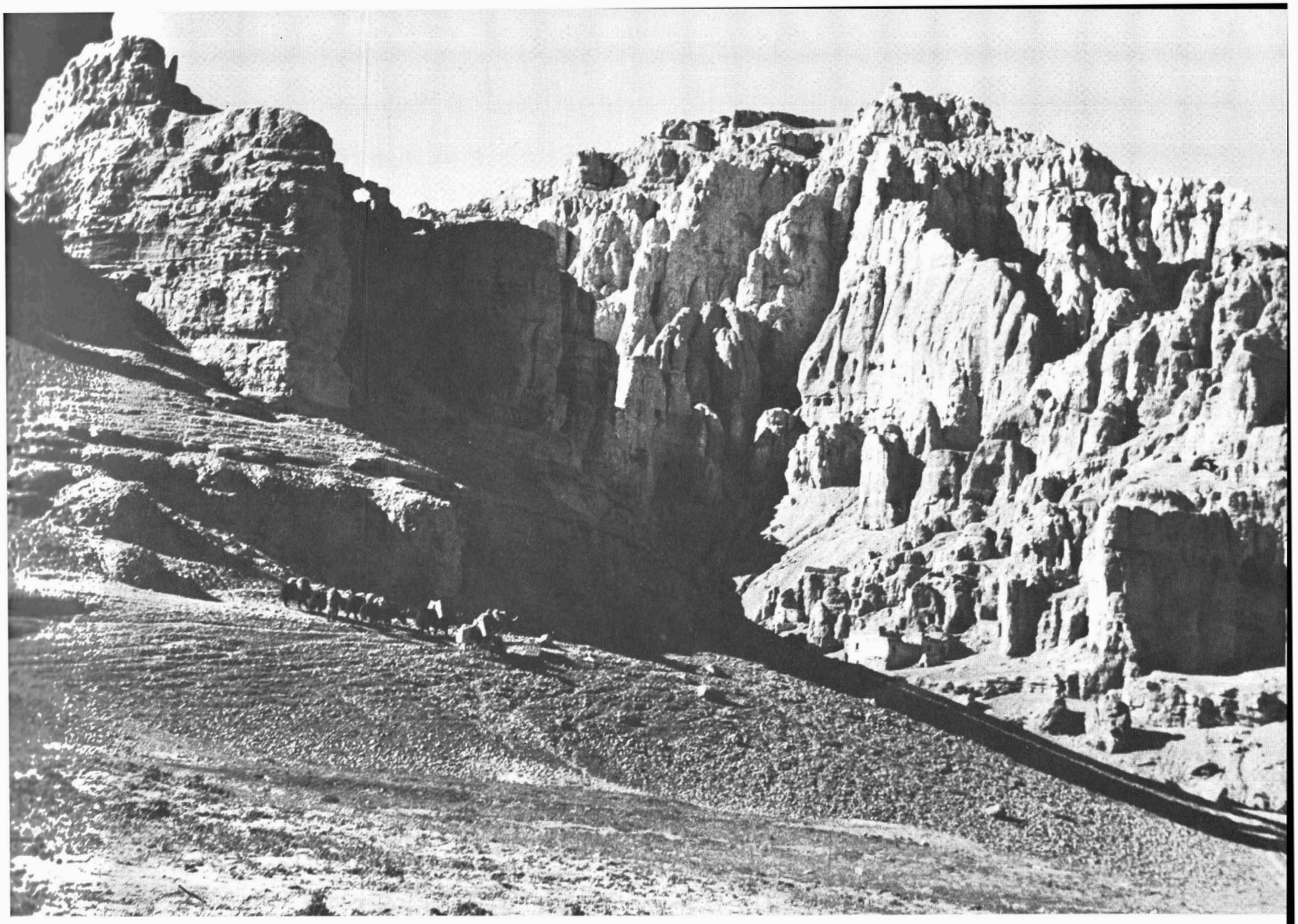
THE CARAVAN AT ALANGTAR GORGE
Western Tibet

We and our animals had to climb the slope on the right to get to the top and continue our journey. The sheer hill was several hundred feet high, and was interrupted by landslides. A most fearful experience!



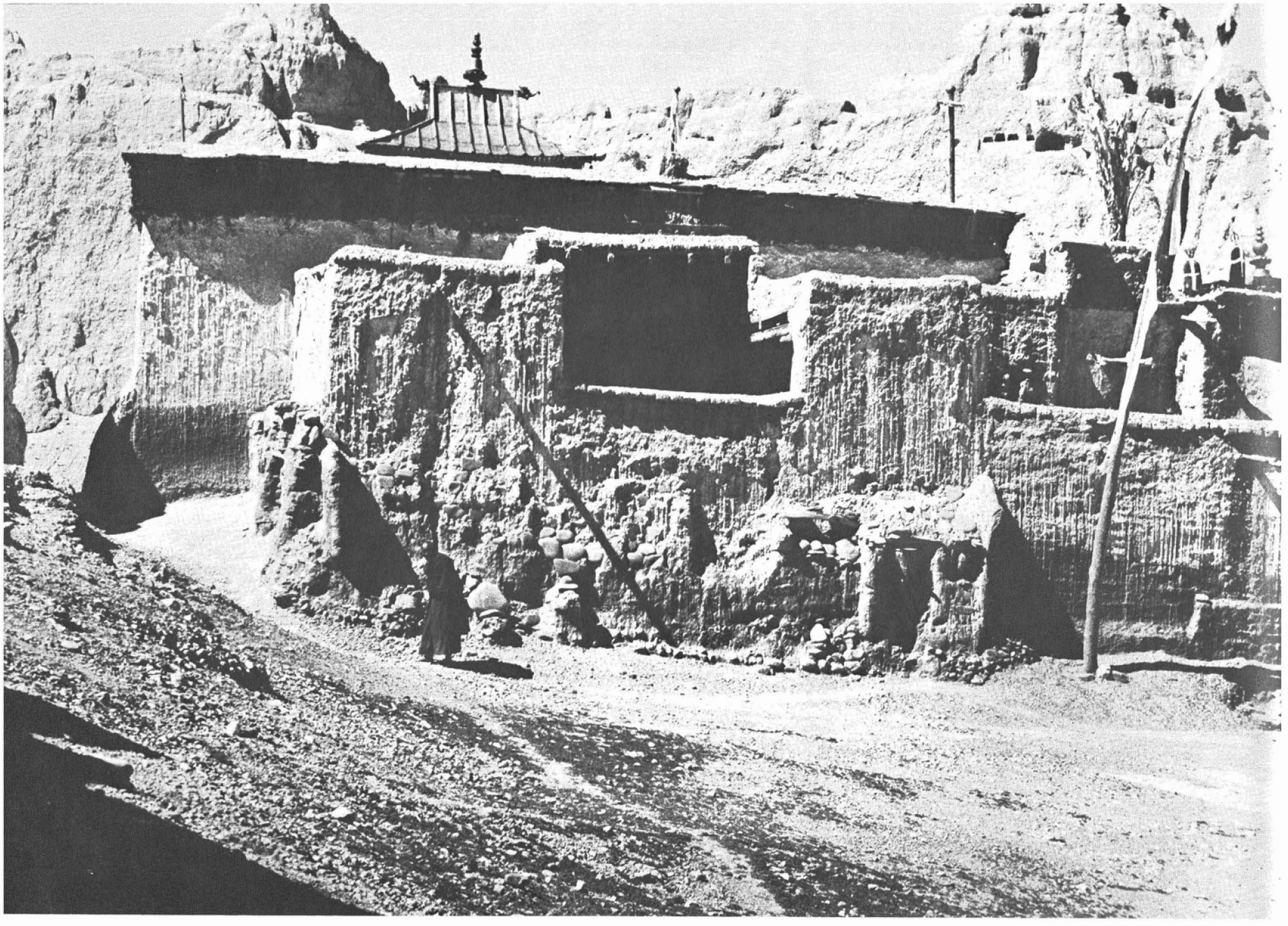
THE GOLDEN-ROOFED TEMPLE OF DAWA DZONG
Western Tibet

At one time, this Golden-Roofed Temple, which is located on a rocky spur between two canyons, resounded with the chants of hundreds of monks. Today it stands in silence, its golden roof gleaming like a forgotten jewel, a reminder of the splendor and faith of a past age. Partially preserved frescoes within it indicate that it was built in the eleventh century.



ENTRANCE TO THE CITY OF THE MOON CASTLE
Western Tibet

Dawa Dzong is situated in a canyon with hundreds of caves piercing the mountain walls. At one time, these caves were inhabited by hermits who had retired for meditation. This city, once the headquarters of the district and an important religious center, was abandoned because of the gradual desiccation of the area, which turned the greater part of Western Tibet into a desert.

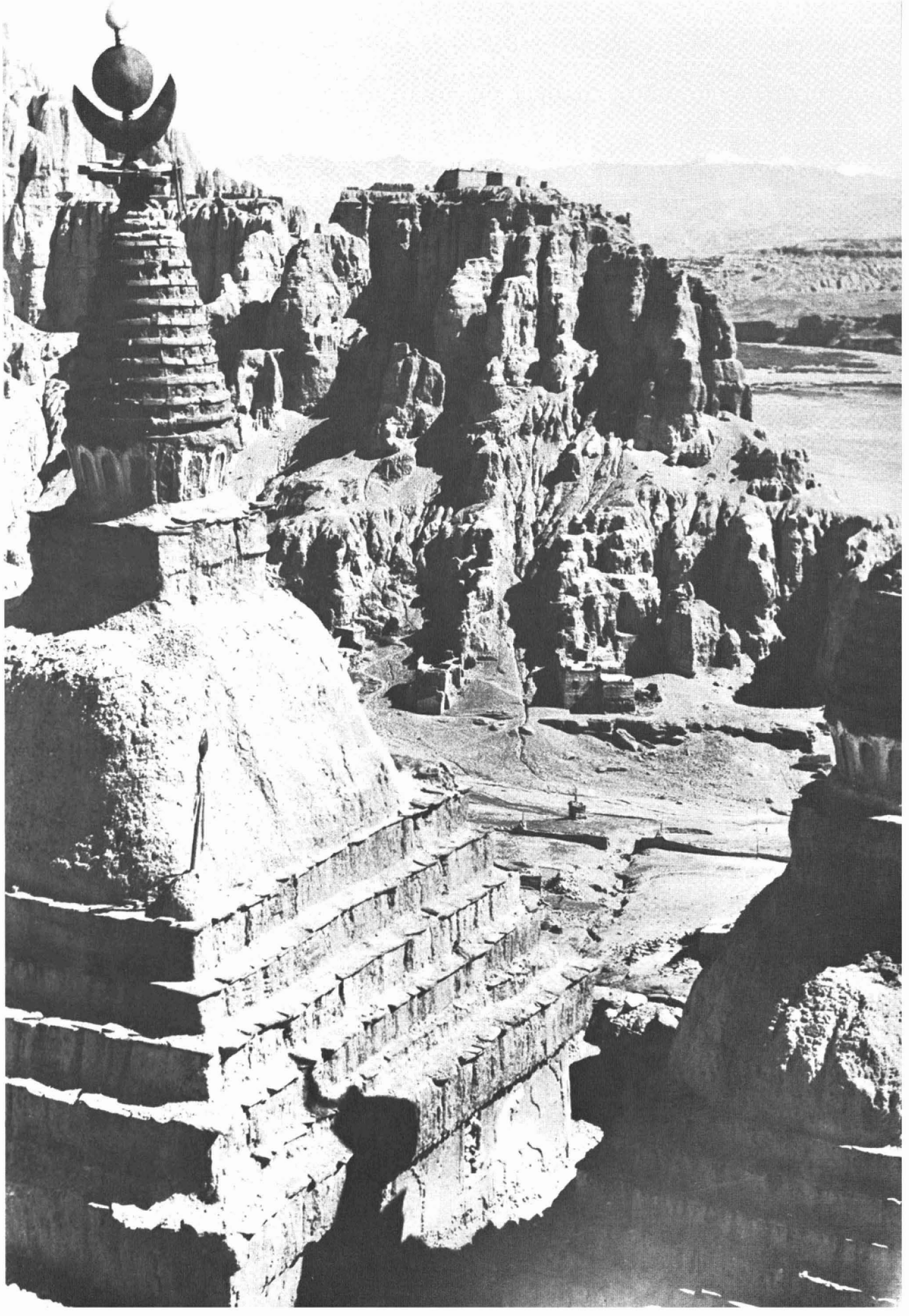


DAWA DZONG MONASTERY
Western Tibet

The ruins of this monastery stood on the crest of a rocky spur overlooking the valley. It was surrounded by temples, *chortens*, and the remains of ancient castles. In the background is the nearly-intact golden roof of the main temple.

Chortens Of Dawa Dzong
Western Tibet

These *chortens* of Dawa Dzong date from the eleventh century. The crescent and the circle represent the moon and the sun, the spiritual lunar and solar forces in man. These forces are integrated in the small blue or golden flame at the top.



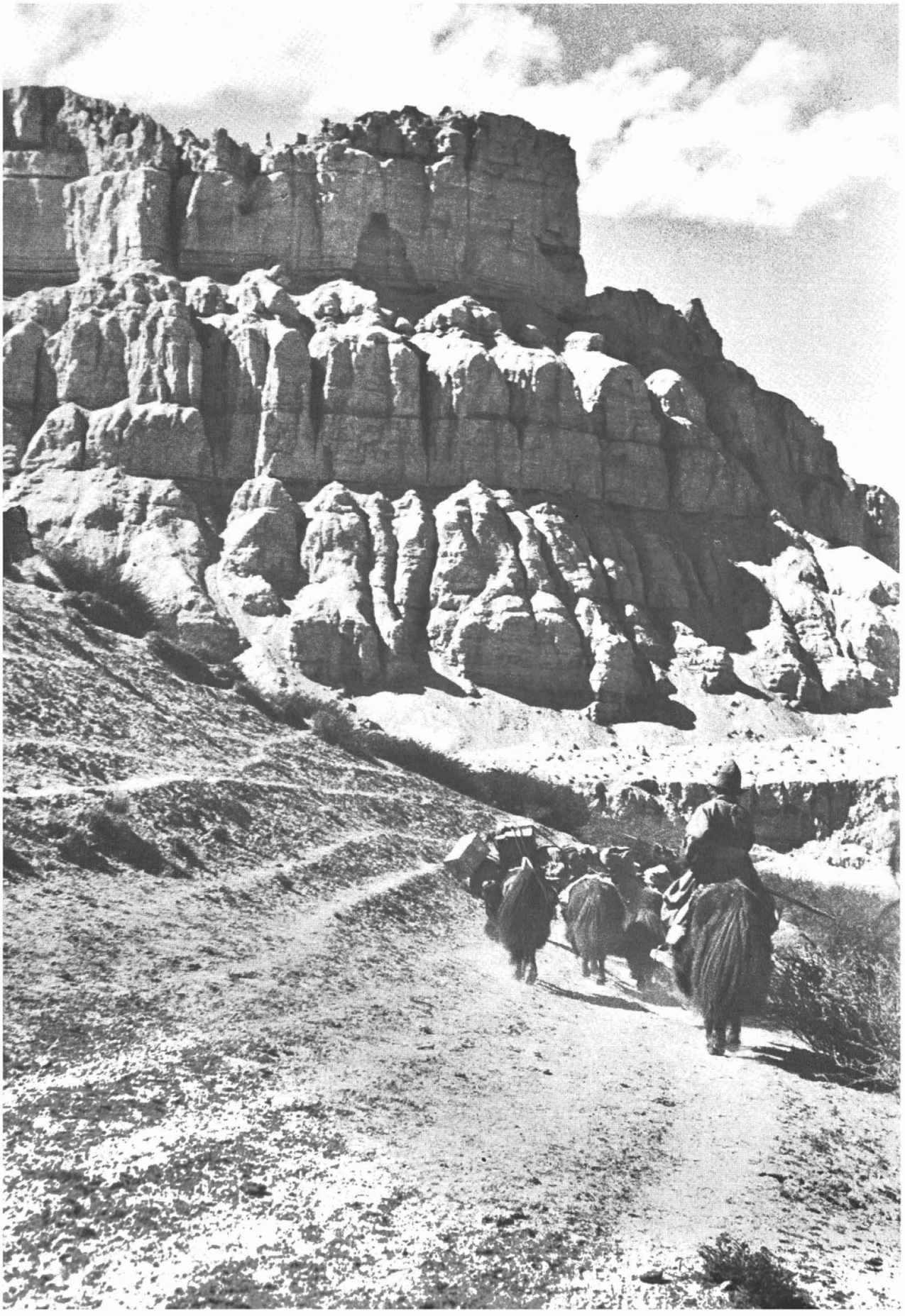
MONASTIC DWELLINGS
Western Tibet

These ancient caves and hermitages in the rock-hills of Dawa Dzong served as meditation chambers and sometimes as abodes of hermits and monks. These caves, as well as the whole city of Dawa Dzong, were abandoned because of a lack of water.

Entrance To A Monastery At Dawa Dzong

Western Tibet

Crumbled clay and pieces of broken stone mark the entrance to this deserted monastery. Except for the large founding monasteries of each of the schools, most monasteries were relatively small, housing as few as ten or twenty monks or as many as two hundred. Monasteries became educational centers which taught philosophy, metaphysics, psychology, meditation, and many ceremonial rituals for the attainment of higher states of consciousness.

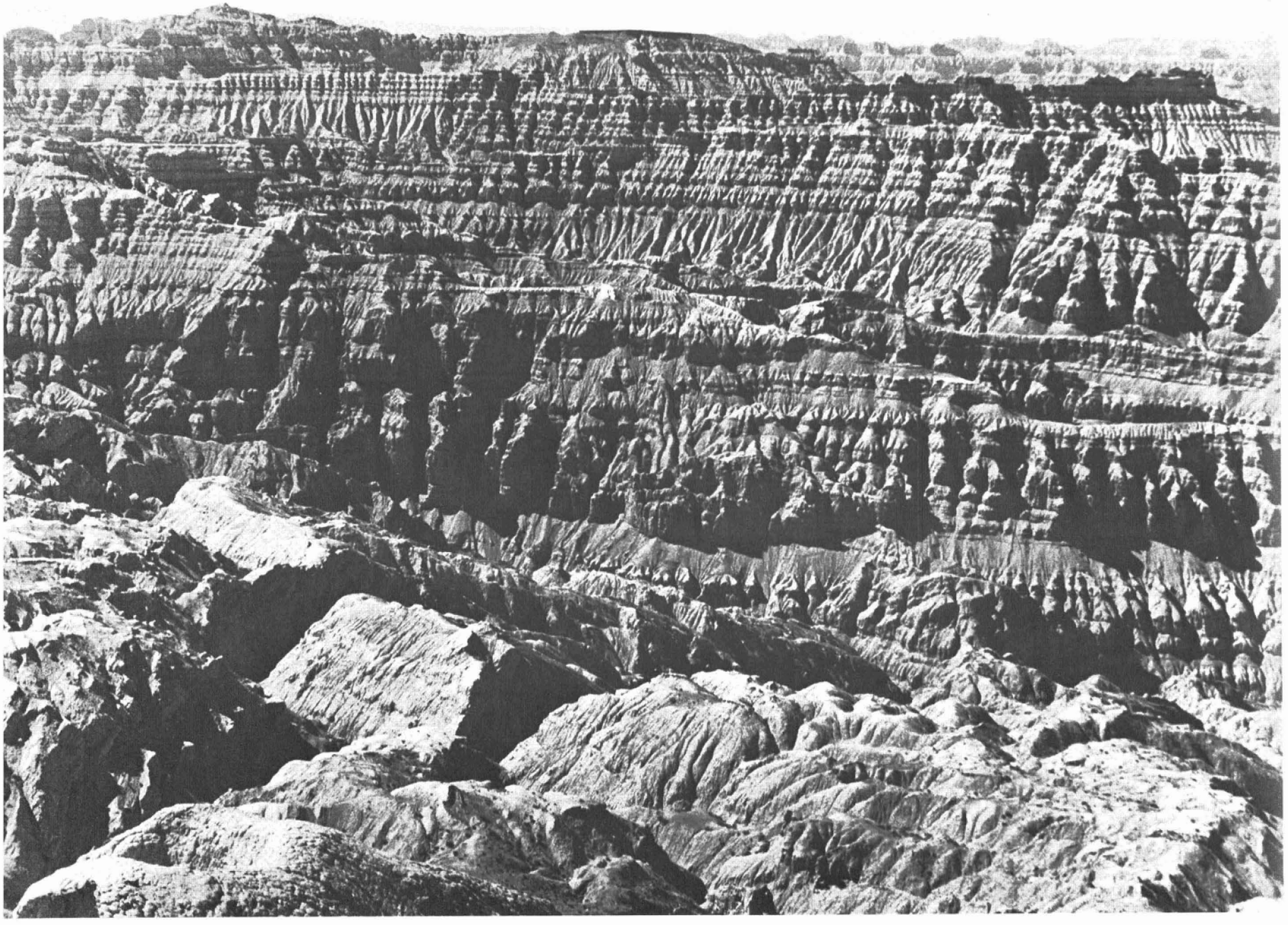


On The Way To Tholing
Western Tibet

Because our yaks and carriers had, once again, to be changed, we had been obliged to stay on at Dawa Dzong for six and a half days. It was like staying on the moon, and we made many pictures there. We were very sad to leave Dawa Dzong behind us now, for the surrounding landscapes had evoked a peaceful and happy mood. We rode on in complete silence to the next stop.

LAMA GOVINDA AT DAWA DZONG
Western Tibet

Lama Govinda is here shown coming down from the temples of Dawa Dzong. The silence of this place was full of voices of the past, alive with the presence of the countless generations who had built and inhabited this ancient city, and the wise and pious kings who had ruled it.



CANYON LANDSCAPE EN ROUTE TO THOLING
Western Tibet

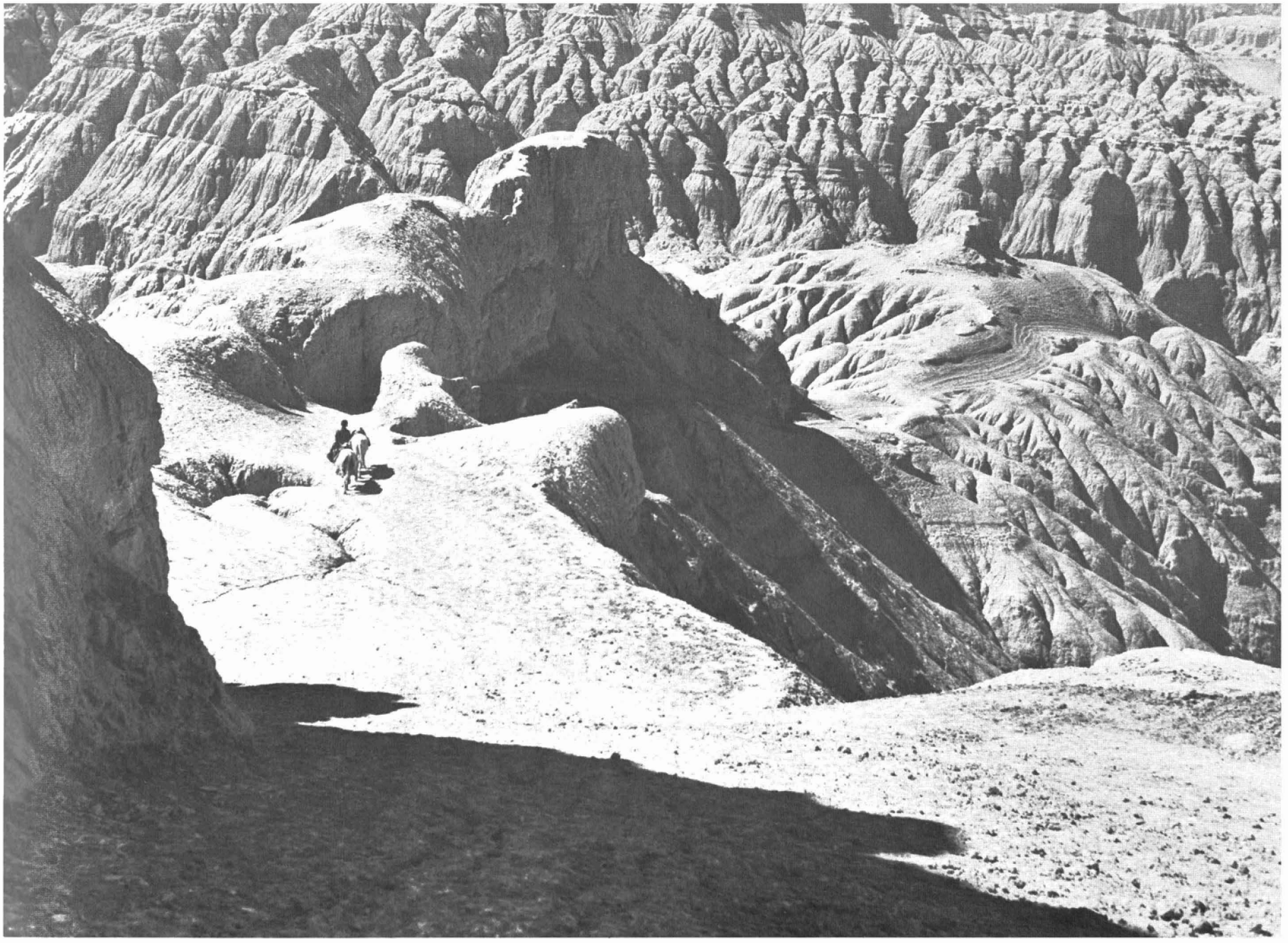
This Tibetan plateau is intersected by gigantic canyons that form a fantastic labyrinth. To be confronted by these canyons of Tholing is a breathtaking experience. That Nature, with the aid of river-waters and the extremes of climate, could have fashioned these hundreds of architectural shapes, resembling South Indian temples, seemed almost impossible—and yet, it was true.

CANYONS NEAR THOLING
Western Tibet

At times the fantastic formations of these canyons—the work of river-waters, melting snow, and the differences in temperature between sunlight and shade, day and night—resembled the great paws of some gigantic, prehistoric creatures. At this altitude the rays of the sun have an unexpected fierceness, and in the shade, the cold becomes all the more penetrating.

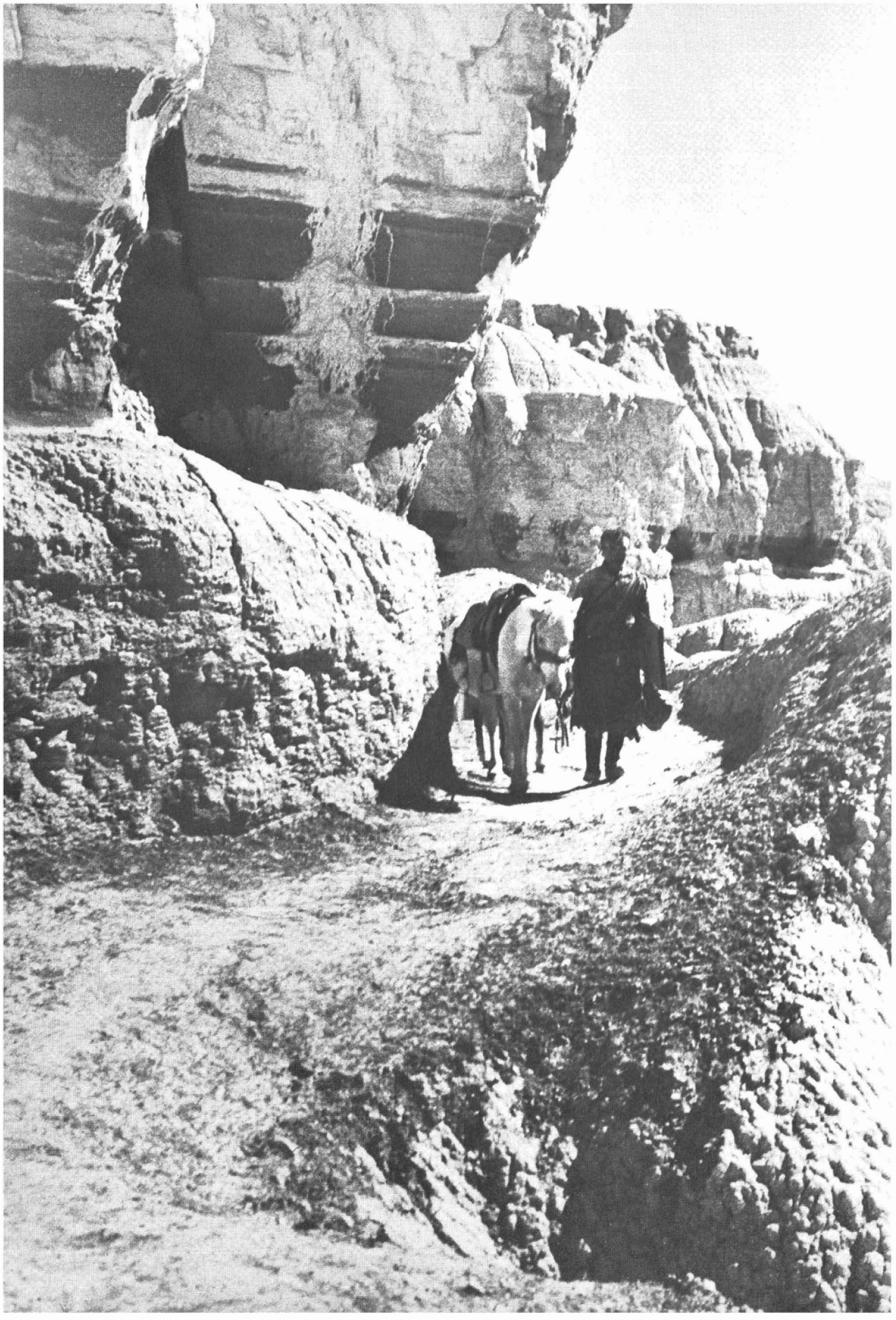
Effects Of Erosion
Western Tibet

These formations resembled giant hands reaching down to the bottom of the canyons. The regularity of the formations was astonishing, and changed with the altitude of the canyon sides.



DESCENT INTO THE CANYONS
Western Tibet

It would be impossible to find one's way in and out of a canyon without a guide who is familiar with every crack in the rocky sides. No roads led down into these canyons, only indications of trails used as caravan routes. If one moved carelessly, sand- or rockslides could close off the return route.



RED AND YELLOW
OVERHANGING ROCKS
Western Tibet

After arriving at Tholing, we rode back on the following day to take more pictures of the canyon scenery. We were luckily able to procure ponies for this purpose, and we succeeded in making many photographs and sketches. It was a happy and fruitful excursion.

A Rest By The Wayside
Western Tibet

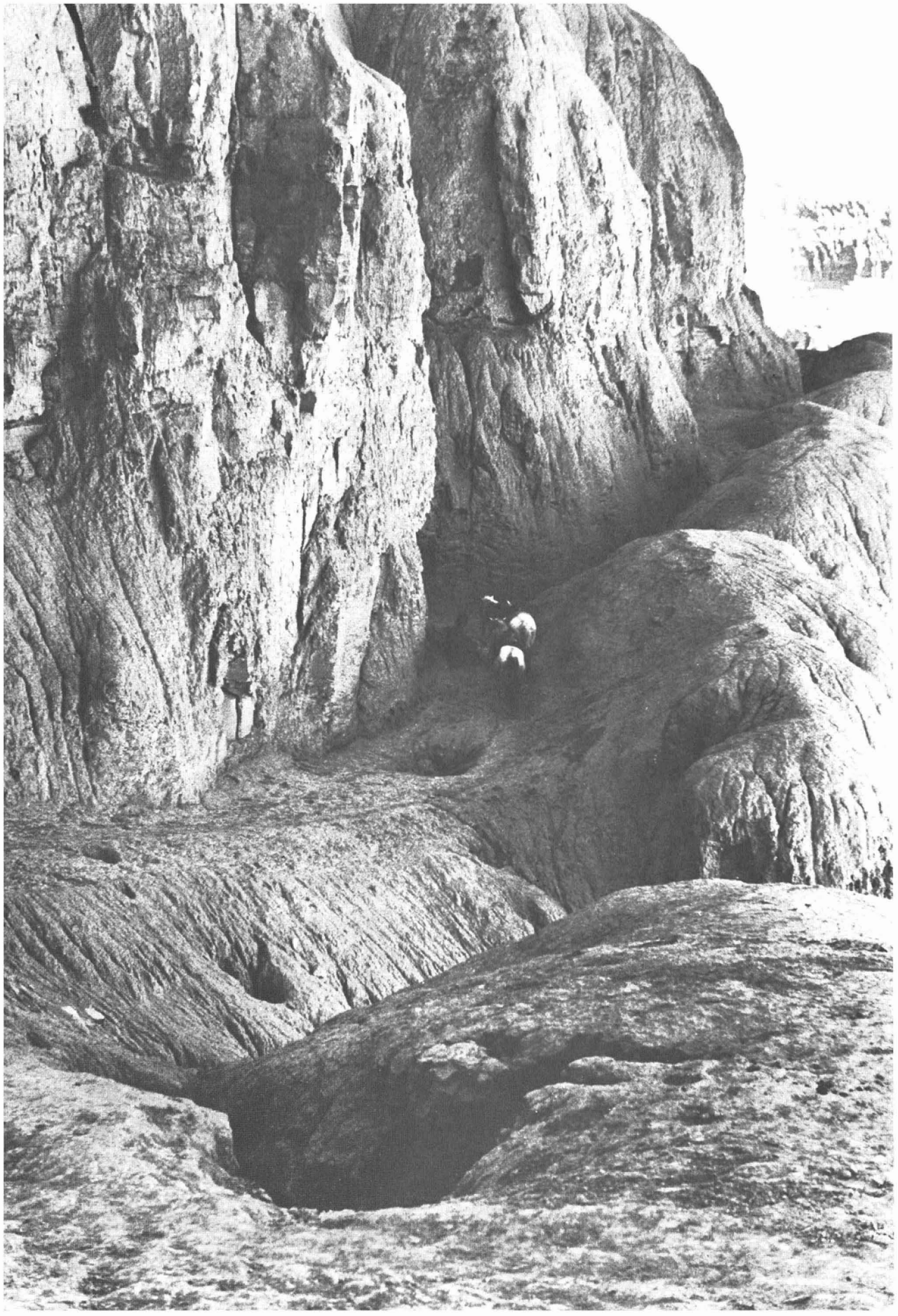
A rest is always welcome: it means Tibetan tea and *tsampa* (roasted barley flour) to refresh one. For protection, villagers in Tibet customarily traveled together, in caravans. Distances between inhabited places were often so great that one could travel for days without meeting another human being. When caravans passed each other, there was much joy and friendly chatter.

GRINDING WHEAT
Tholing

After harvesting, the grain is separated from the chaff by driving cattle over the grain-stalks. Women then grind the grain into flour in a primitive manner, between two hand-millstones, as shown in this picture. In the case of barley, the grain is first roasted in hot sand and then ground fine to be eaten as *tsampa*. *Tsampa* is the staple food of Tibet.

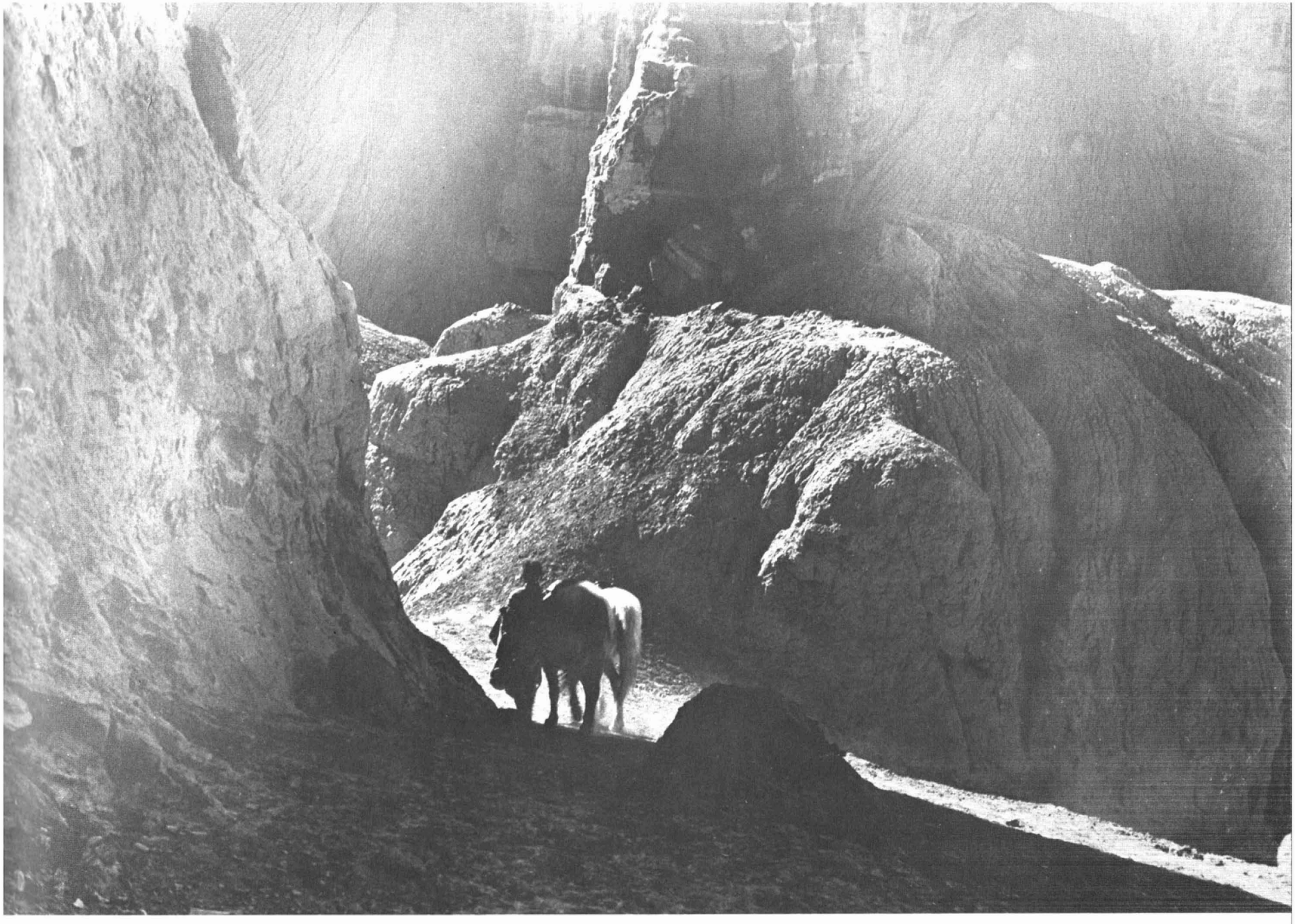
TIBETAN KITCHEN
Tholing

The houses of Tibetan peasants are extremely simple, with only the absolutely necessary articles in them. Everything is done by hand. Cooking is done over earthen fireplaces. In higher altitudes, where wood is scarce, yak dung is used for fuel.



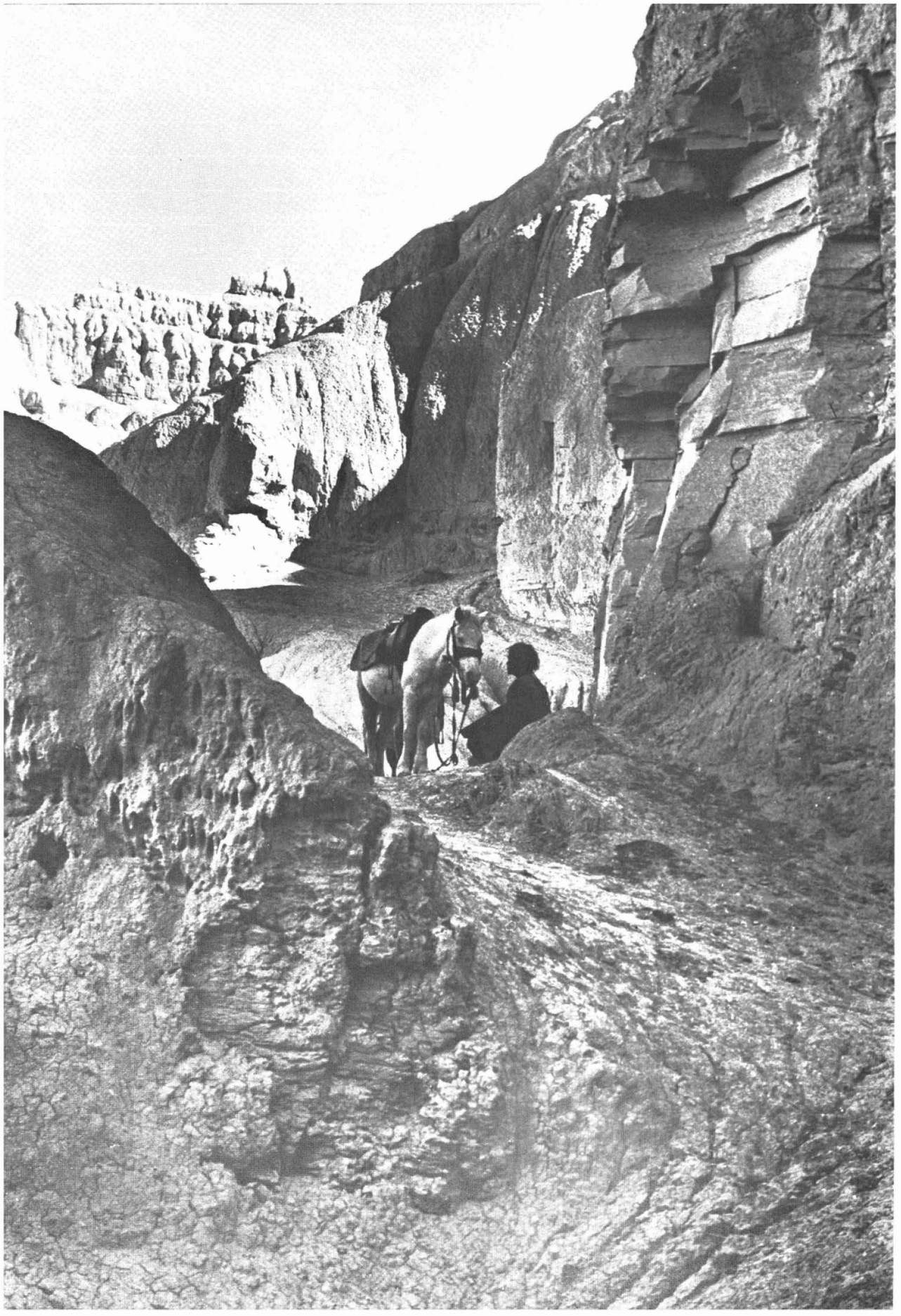
A Canyon Scene
Western Tibet

Deeper down in the canyon, there was no wind, and the temperature was warm. Different strata of rock revealed different patterns and shapes. The fantastic formations made one forget the dangers of the trek, although the trail was sometimes interrupted by deep holes and crevices.



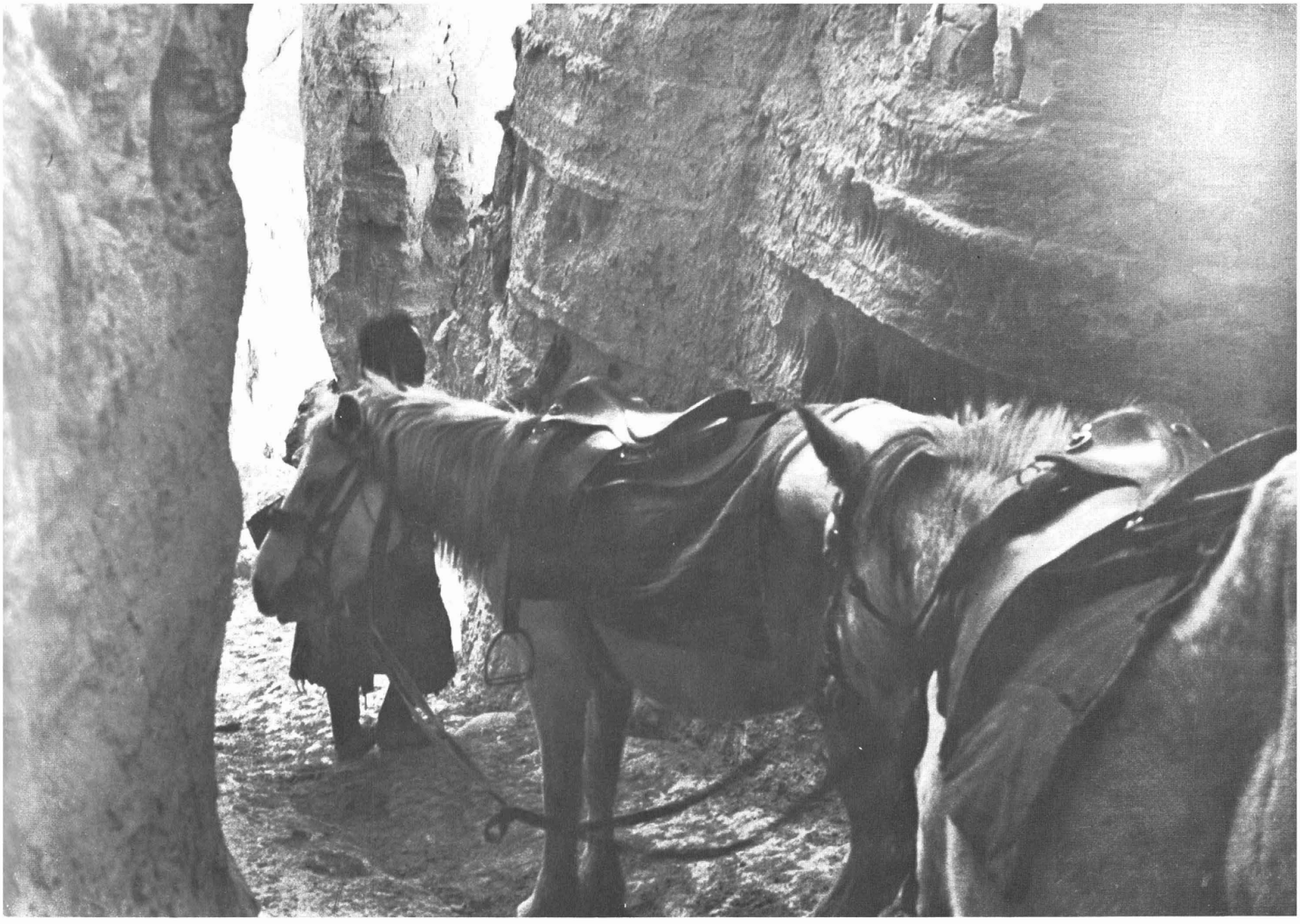
THE DOWNWARD WAY INTO THE CANYONS
Western Tibet

Going down, down, down amidst weird formations gives one an eerie feeling. The shafts of light develop a mysterious quality, and columns of rock take on the most fantastic shapes. The trail was often so narrow that the luggage on the packhorses scraped on both sides as they went on.



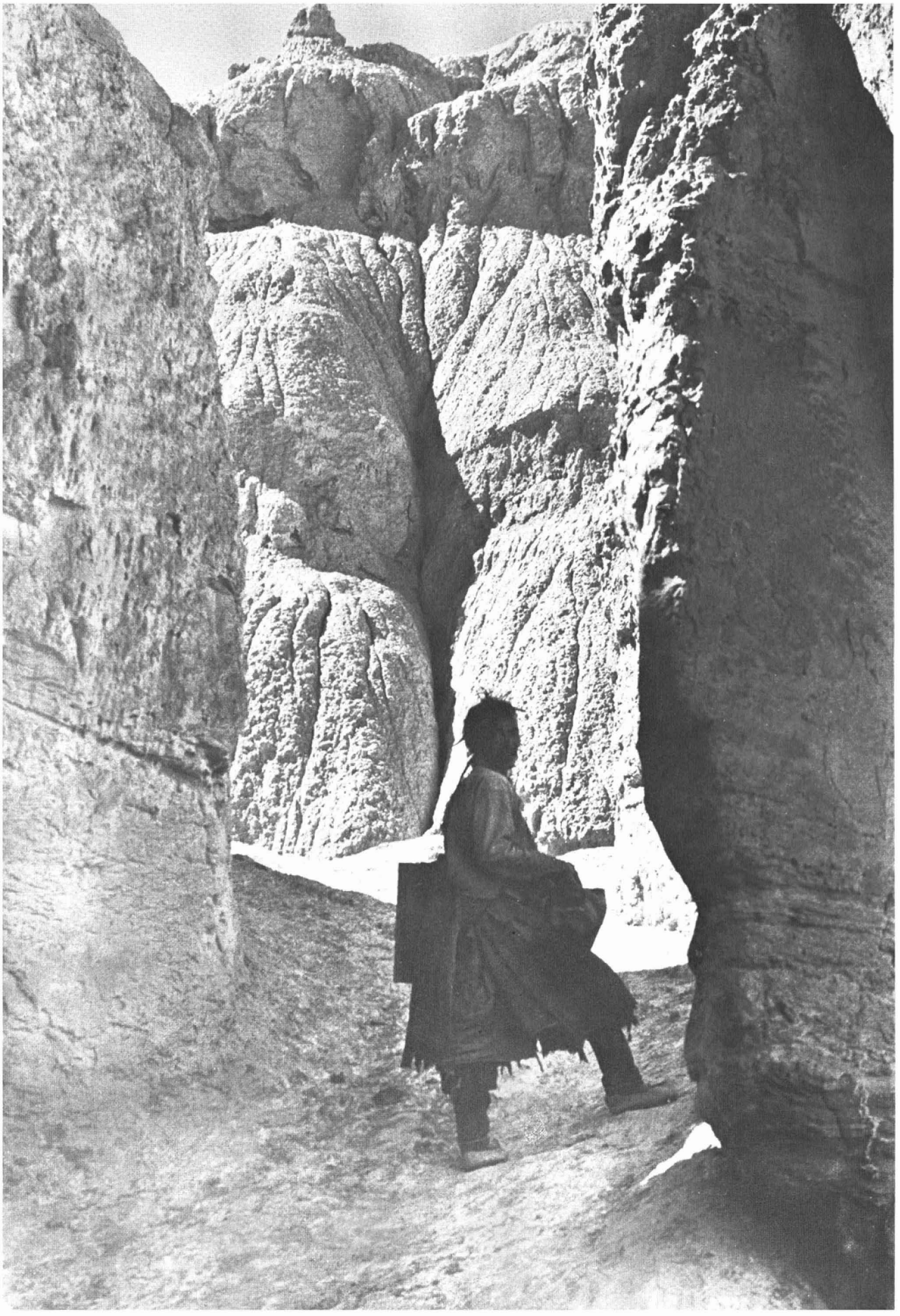
A Rest In The Canyon
Western Tibet

Our groom (called *syce* in India) rests while we make sketches in the canyons. At the bottom of the canyons were dry riverbeds, for the tributaries that had formed these miles and miles of canyon had largely disappeared. At times, fed by sudden rainstorms, waters would reappear in a flash, flooding the dry riverbeds, coursing through the narrow canyons.



Narrow Passage In The Canyons
Western Tibet

The horizontal ridges on the right are man-made. Everyone who reaches the bottom of the canyon safely scrapes off a little sand from the canyon wall as a blessing and for luck, as our guide is doing in this picture. The passage down, at certain points, is so very narrow that laden animals can barely squeeze through.



SUNSHINE IN THE CANYONS
Western Tibet

The lower you go, the narrower the passage becomes. The canyons were approximately three thousand to five thousand feet deep. They gave one the feeling of wandering about in a world where neither plants nor animals could live.

THOLING OVER ANCIENT CAVES
Western Tibet

Lama Govinda's height in relation to these ancient caves gives one an indication of their size and a sense of how much the earth has grown over them. These caves were probably lived in, since they seem to have niches and holes where water and grain could be stored. The town on the surface is present-day Tholing.

CHORTENS OF THE GOLDEN TEMPLE OF THOLING
Western Tibet

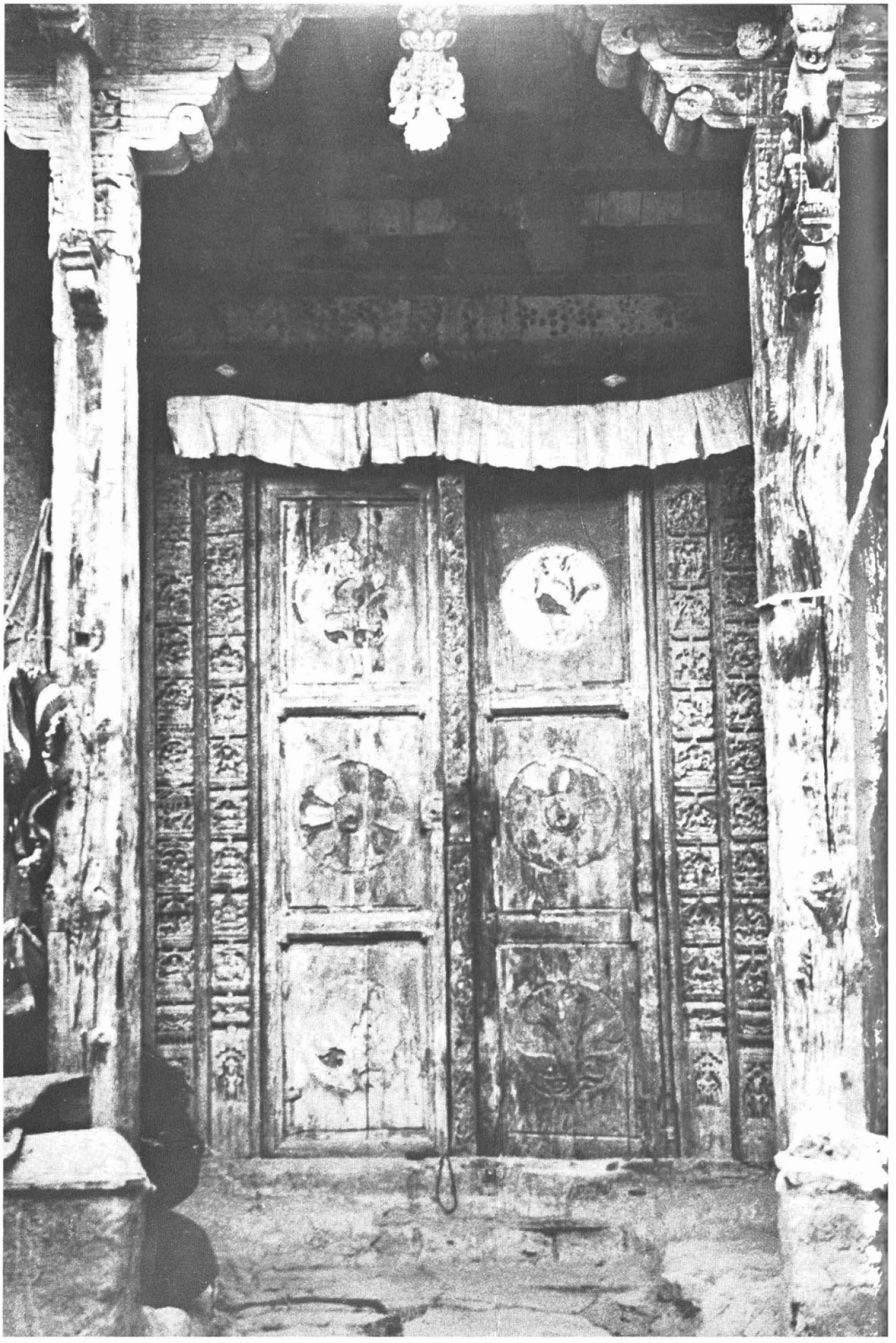
The Golden Temple of Tholing, which was founded about 1000 A.D. by Rinchen Zangpo, was famous as the greatest seat of learning in Western Tibet. Tholing reached the peak of its fame in the middle of the eleventh century, when the Golden Temple was the site of the Sixth Buddhist Council. Great scholars and spiritual dignitaries from all over Tibet took part in this council, which marked the consolidation of the Buddhist revival of Tibet and the beginning of a new era.

The Great Chorten Of Tholing
Western Tibet

This is one of the main *chortens* of Tholing Monastery in Western Tibet. Beginning with the heaviest, most physical element of earth, the structural elements of the *chorten* symbolize a rising upward toward pure awareness. The base and all cubic structures represent the element Earth, the state of solidity; the cupola, the element Water, the state of fluidity; the conical spire, the element Fire, the state of incandescence; and the golden umbrella on top, the element Air, the gaseous state. None of these changeable elements has a permanent reality. The subdivisions in the terraces below the cupola, as well as the rims in the conical structure, correspond to certain stages of meditation. This *chorten* is of *lhabab* design (*lha* meaning gods and *bab* meaning to descend). The stairways in its upper structure, which face all four directions, symbolize the descent of the Buddha from Tavatimsa Heaven, where he expounded the holy doctrine to his mother, who had died shortly after his birth. From Tavatimsa Heaven he returned to earth to help all sentient beings.

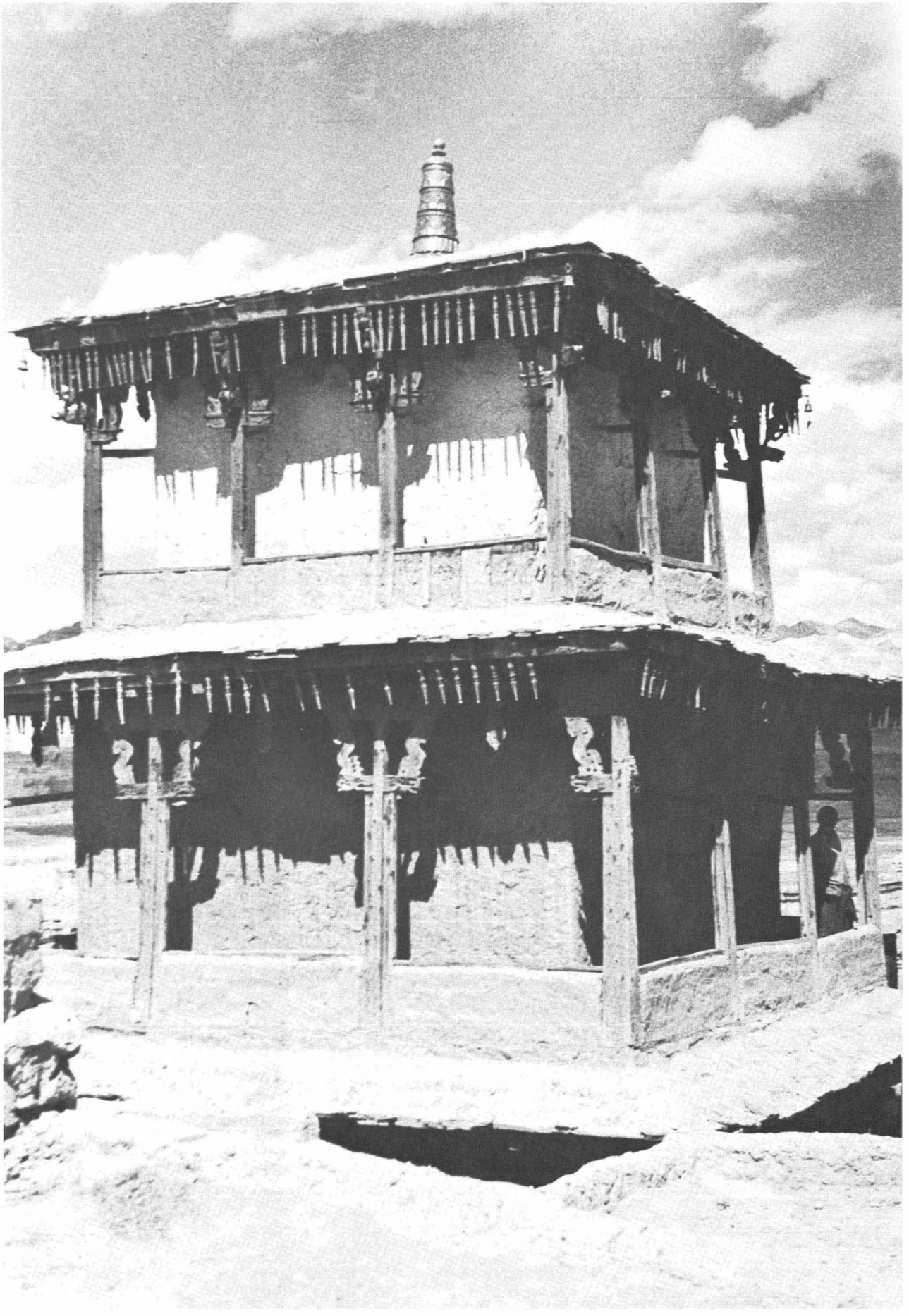
ENTRANCE TO THE ANCIENT TEMPLE OF THOLING
Western Tibet

This was the famous Golden Temple of Tholing, built by Rinchen Zangpo, the founder of Tholing Monastery, about 1000 A.D. It displayed numerous frescoes in a style similar to that of Tsaparang. Rinchen Zangpo was already an old man when, in the middle of the eleventh century, he presided here over the Sixth Council, at which Atīśa was received with great reverence.



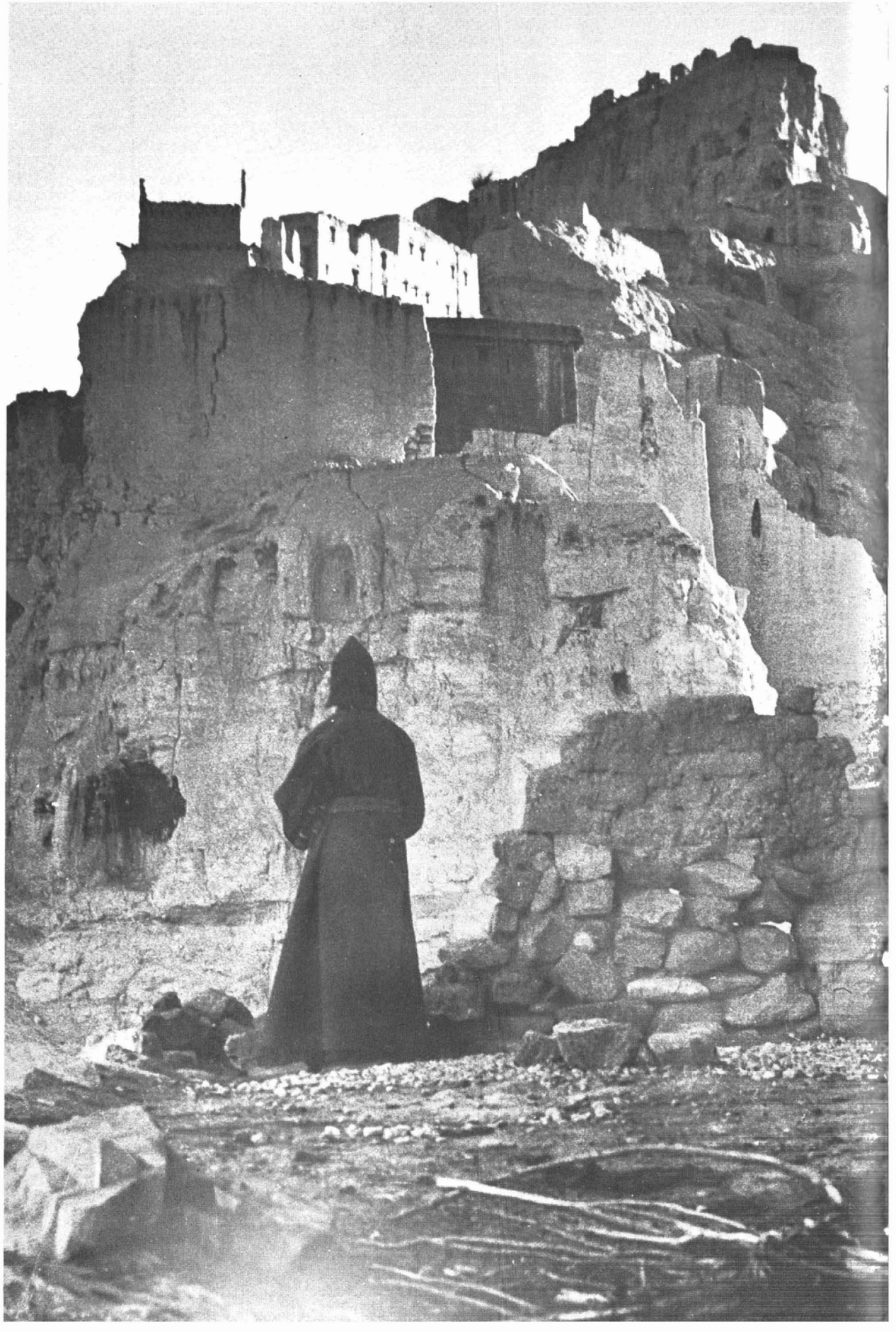
THE THREE-STORIED
MANDALA-TEMPLE OF
RINCHEN ZANGPO
Tholing Monastery, Western Tibet

Inside this structure is a mandala, a circular design containing various symbols of meditative experience. It represents the totality of the human consciousness in a particular state of meditation; it is a map of the mind which shows the way to and from the center, and indicates visions to be had along the way. Most of these visions are symbolized by enlightened beings who (rather than being self-existing realities outside of ourselves) indicate certain states of consciousness. The three stories represent three different planes of consciousness.



In The Ruins Of Tsaparang
Western Tibet

Tsaparang was the ancient capital of the Guge Dynasty. The ruins on the very top were the castles and private chapels of the kings. The large buildings in the middle ground were temples and monasteries where hundreds of monks were housed. Tsaparang was abandoned centuries ago due to the overthrow of the dynasty and the slow desiccation of the country.



GOLDEN DHYĀNI-BUDDHAS
Red Temple, Tsaparang

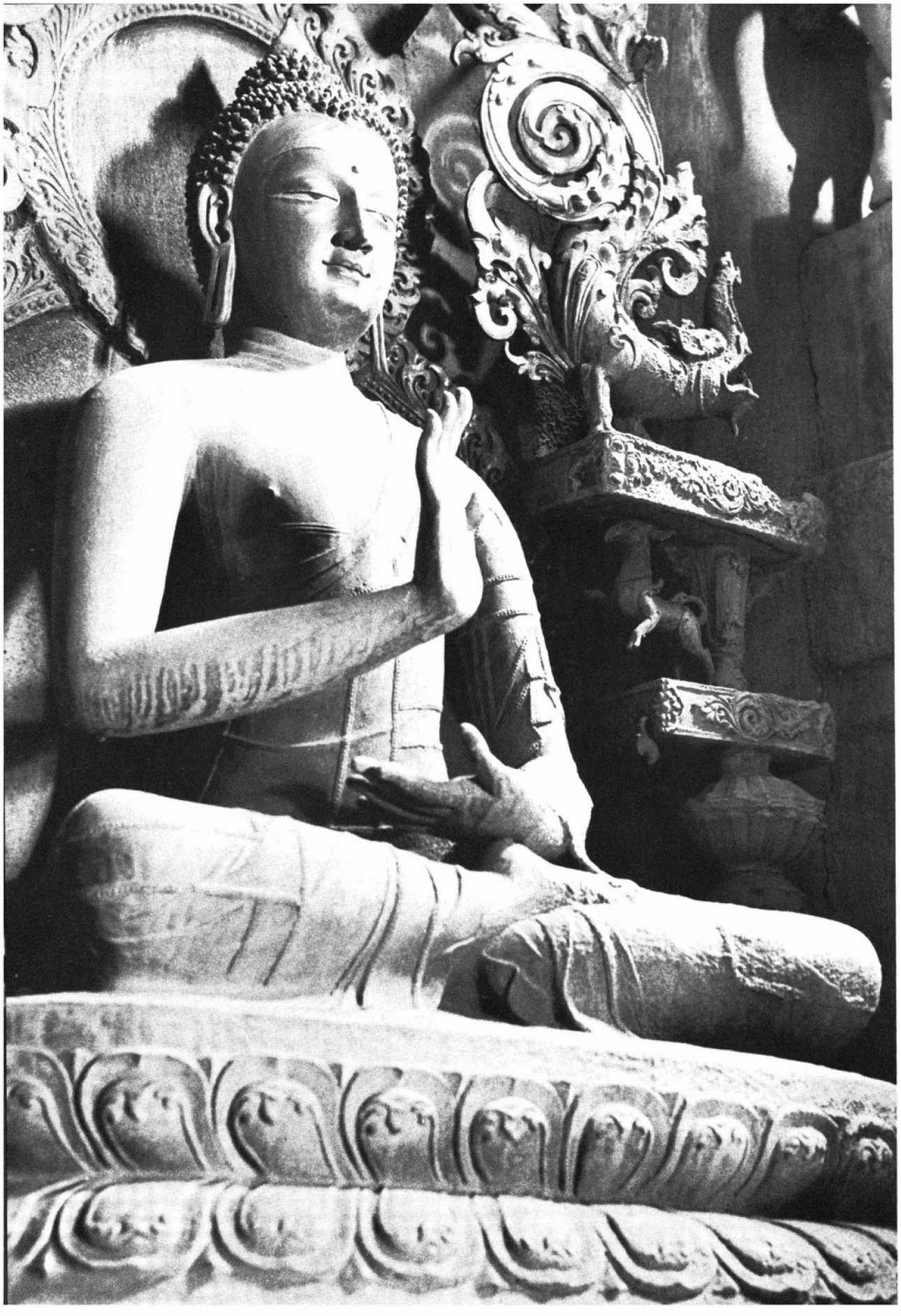
This is a section of a wall in the best preserved temple of Tsaparang. The small golden Buddhas covering the wall stand out against its dark red color, their bright gold individual halos surrounding royal blue grounds. The Buddha statues in the foreground are larger than life-size, and are heavily gilded. By his *mudrā* of giving, the central one of the large statues seen in this picture can be identified as Dhyāni-Buddha Ratnasambhava. To his right sits Vairocana.

DHYĀNI-BUDDHA AKṢOBHYA
Red Temple, Tsaparang

Since the earth-touching *mudrā* of Dhyāni-Buddha Akṣobhya is the same as that of Śākyamuni Buddha, the two Buddhas can be distinguished by their color or their vehicles, if they are shown. Both this statue and the statue of Śākyamuni (the main image of the Red Temple) are gilded, so we can therefore only guess that this statue represents Akṣobhya, the embodiment of mirrorlike wisdom that reflects all forms and leads to the realization of their transcendental nature.

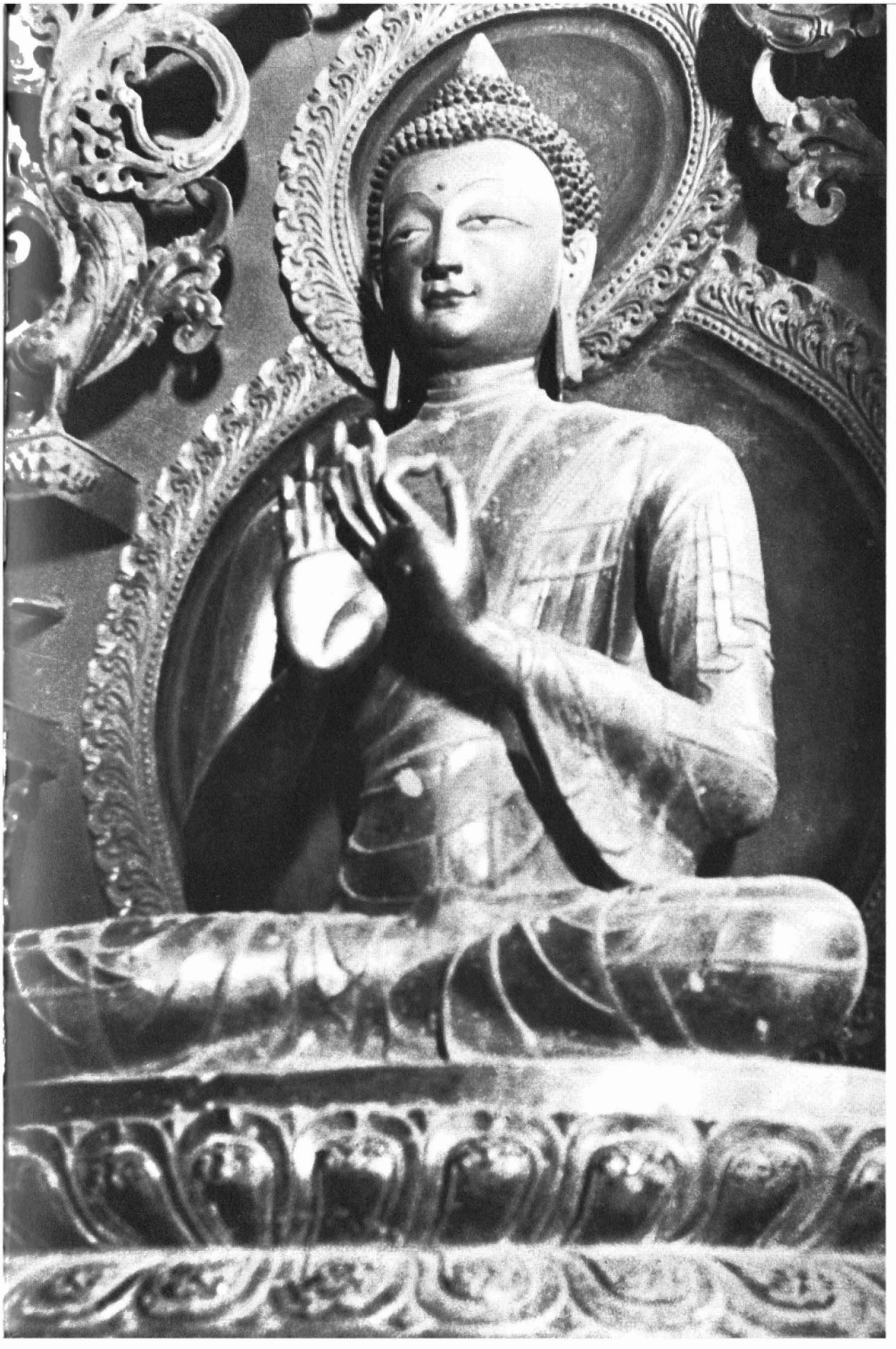
DHYĀNI-BUDDHAS
Red Temple, Tsaparang

Both these Dhyāni-Buddhas depict Vairocana Buddha, who constitutes the center of the fundamental mandala, and whose *mudrā* is the Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law. They stand to the right of the main image in the Red Temple of Tsaparang.



BUDDHA AMOGHASIDDHI
Red Temple, Tsaparang

Dhyāni-Buddha Amoghasiddhi belongs to the Northern sector of the meditation mandala. His gesture (*abhaya mudrā*) is that of fearlessness and blessing. He is the embodiment of the Wisdom that Accomplishes All Works. This image is over life-size (like all of the others in the Red Temple of Tsaparang) and is heavily gilded.



BUDDHA VAIROCANA
Red Temple, Tsaparang

Dhyāni-Buddha Vairocana is the central Buddha of the meditation mandala of Dhyāni-Buddhas. His *mudrā* signifies the Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law, the activation of the spiritual and universal law in this world, which was manifested by Buddha Śākyamuni (the historical Buddha) in his first programmatic sermon at Sarnath, near Benares.

BUDDHA RATNASAMBHAVA
Red Temple, Tsaparang

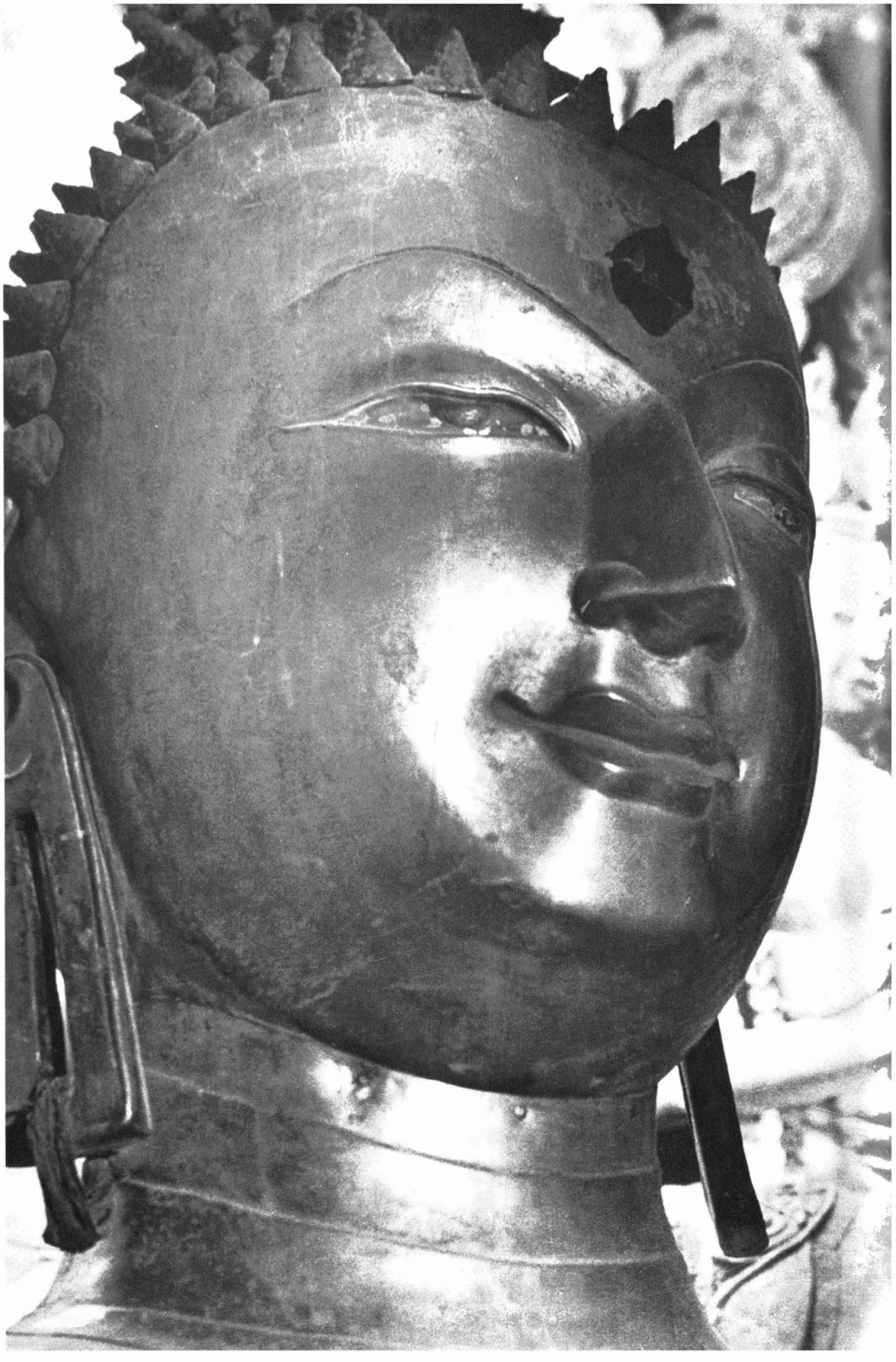
Dhyāni-Buddha Ratnasambhava is the embodiment of the Wisdom of Fundamental Equality, in the face of which all things reveal their equal origin. In the realization of the essential oneness of all beings, all self-importance dissolves. His gesture, with the palm of the right hand turned outwards, is that of giving (*dāna mudrā*). He resides in the Southern sector of the mandala; his body is yellow or gold.

BUDDHA ŚĀKYAMUNI
Red Temple, Tsaparang

He is the Buddha of our world-cycle. This is the main image of the Red Temple of Tsaparang, which was probably built in the twelfth century. While the style of this image is relatively natural, all the other images of Tsaparang are characterized by their elongated waists and the simplicity of their bodily forms, reminiscent of Gothic sculpture.

The Head of Buddha Śākyamuni
Red Temple, Tsaparang

Buddha Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha of our present age, is the fourth Buddha of this 'kalpa' (world period), in which altogether five Buddhas are expected. When the teachings of Śākyamuni have lost their purity, or their effectiveness, then Buddha Maitreya (the fifth Buddha), will restore their purity. The name Śākyamuni means 'the wise one of the Śākya clan'. This beautiful image is of gilded metal.



MAITREYA, THE COMING BUDDHA
Yamāntaka Temple, Tsaparang

The coming Buddha, known as 'The Great Loving One', is the fifth and last Buddha of this world-cycle. The gesture of Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law symbolizes what he will do when he comes to restore the purity of the Buddha's teachings. This statue is of gilded clay.

THE HEAD OF TĀRĀ
Red Temple, Tsaparang

This figure of Tārā is of gilded metal. She wears the crown of the Five Wisdoms: the Wisdom of the Great Mirror, the Wisdom of Equality, the Distinguishing Wisdom, the Wisdom of Perfect Action, and the Wisdom of the Universal Law (*dharmadhatu*).

ATTENDANT BODHISATTVA
Red Temple, Tsaparang

The Buddha in the early scriptures is generally accompanied by the Vedic deities Brahma and Śākra; the old gods were not simply dismissed, but were incorporated into the Buddhist religion, as Protectors of the Dharma. In this case, however, the Buddha's attendants appear to be two Bodhisattvas, one of which is shown in this picture. In early Buddhism, the names of the Bodhisattvas were not yet known.

HEVAJRA HERUKA, YAB-YUM
Yamāntaka Temple, Tsaparang

Hevajra is the wrathful tutelary deity (Heruka or Yidam) of an entire system of doctrine, the Hevajra Tantra and its commentaries. He is often invoked to help practitioners of this secret, advanced doctrine. Hevajra has eight heads, sixteen arms, and four legs. Here he is shown in *yab-yum*, the tantric symbol of the mystical union of male and female polarities.

YAMĀNTAKA, SLAYER OF DEATH
Yamāntaka Temple, Tsaparang

Yamāntaka's main head is that of a bull. Above it and to its sides are the heads of wrathful gods; on the very top is the head of Mañjuśrī, who embodies the transcendental knowledge that death is ultimately illusion, and assures the devotee that those who identify themselves with ultimate reality overcome death and are liberated from the chains of samsara. The papers near the statue are loose pages of old manuscripts.

Yab-Yum Image
Tsaparang

In Tibetan iconography, *yab-yum* signifies the union of Wisdom and Active Compassion. In these seated metal figures, wisdom is represented by the divine female form, compassionate action by the divine male. Both symbolize the lunar and solar psychic faculties in human beings, which must be integrated in the process of enlightenment.

YAMĀNTAKA, YAB-YUM
Yamāntaka Temple, Tsaparang

In this picture, Yamāntaka, the conqueror of Death, is shown in *yab-yum* form. This statue stood among many others in the small temple of Yamāntaka in Tsaparang. Yamāntaka combines in himself the animal, the demon, and the god, the primordial power of life in its aspects of creation and destruction, and the faculty of knowledge which ripens into liberating wisdom.

WHITE TĀRĀ (DOLMA KARMO)
Red Temple, Tsaparang

All female emanations of Buddhahood are regarded as incarnations of different aspects of Tārā or Dolma, the savioress who was said to be born from a tear of Avalokiteśvara. She has seven all-seeing eyes of compassion, three in her face and one each on the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet. In this fresco of the White Tārā, her right hand is turned outwards in the gesture of giving, while her left hand gives a blessing and holds the stem of a fully opened lotus. Tārā appears in eight or in twenty-one forms, of which the Green Tāra or Dolma Changu is the most popular in Tibet.

MAÑJUŚRĪ
Red Temple, Tsaparang

Mañjuśrī is the Bodhisattva of Learning and Wisdom. In his right hand he wields the flaming sword of discrimination that cuts through the darkness of ignorance. To his left, the book of knowledge rests on a lotus flower. The sword represents active wisdom; the book represents the transcendental wisdom of the Prajñā-pāramitā, or wisdom as memory, wisdom in its accumulated, passive aspect.

DHYĀNI-BUDDHA VAIROCANA
(No. 1)
White Temple, Tsaparang

The cult of Vairocana was at its height when the White Temple of Tsaparang was built, in the tenth or eleventh century. Like many other statues of Vairocana in this temple, this statue shows the *mudrā* of oneness, and on either side, his vehicle, the lions. His three faces, two of which are visible, represent the three worlds: the world of desire, the world of form, and the formless world. Vairocana occupies the center of the mandala of the five Dhyāni-Buddhas and embodies the highest Buddha-qualities in their transcendental aspect.

BUDDHA VAIROCANA (NO. 2)
White Temple, Tsaparang

This bigger than life-size statue of Vairocana depicts the *bodhagri mudrā* of oneness, or the merging of the mundane and the supramundane. Two of his faces are visible in the picture. Like most of the other statues in the White Temple, this gilded statue is made of molded clay. When statues are gilded, the *mudrās* are the main indications for determining the name of the figure, especially when there are no animal-symbols that serve as vehicles (*vahanas*). The gesture of both Śākyamuni Buddha and Dhyāni-Buddha Akṣobhya consists of touching the earth with the right hand, with the palm turned inwards. Ratnasambhava has a similar gesture, except that his right palm is turned outwards. Amogasiddhi has his right hand raised to his shoulder with the palm outwards, while Amitābha's two hands rest in his lap, with the palms up, the right hand over the left. Vairocana is generally depicted in the gesture of Turning the Wheel of the Universal Law.

BUDDHA VAIROCANA (NO. 3)
White Temple, Tsaparang

The gesture of this gilded, bigger than life-size statue is the Turning of the Wheel of the Universal Law. Every sentient being should contribute in his own way to the universal law by acting in conformity with it; thus the ethics of living beings, or the moral law of the Dharma, is established. Vairocana's vehicle is the lion; hence the lions on the left and right of his throne.

BUDDHA VAIROCANA (NO. 4)
White Temple, Tsaparang

Vairocana here also displays the *mudrā* of Turning the Wheel of the Universal Law. Each of his faces has three eyes because he is the knower of the three times: past, present, and future (the third eye is symbolized by the *ūrṇa*, the raised dot between the two eyes.) Vairocana personifies the wisdom of understanding the universal law, in which pure awareness becomes identical with the true nature of all being.

BUDDHA VAIROCANA (NO. 5)
White Temple, Tsaparang

This statue of Vairocana, like other Dhyāni Buddhas in the White Temple of Tsaparang, is represented in the Sambhogakāya form. He has three faces and nine eyes, and depicts the gesture of meditation (*dhyāna mudrā*). The threefold jewel in his hands has been placed there by his devotees. On his throne, below the lotus-seat, are carved the Wheel of the Law and the Lucky Net. The Lucky Net, which is derived from one of the sermons of the Buddha, is the net of the various conceptions of the world, as well as the net with which the treasures of the sea are caught.

BUDDHA ŚĀKYAMUNI IN
MEDITATION POSTURE
White Temple, Tsaparang

Here the Bodhi Tree of Enlightenment has been changed to a palm tree, which is regarded by Tibetans as characteristic of India. Although willows and poplars grow in the lower altitudes of Tibet, other varieties of trees are rare or unknown. The two attendants on either side of the Buddha are usually Brahma and Śākra, but are here two Bodhisattvas. On the wall behind them are frescoed scenes from the life of Śākyamuni Buddha.

AVALOKITEŚVARA
White Temple, Tsaparang

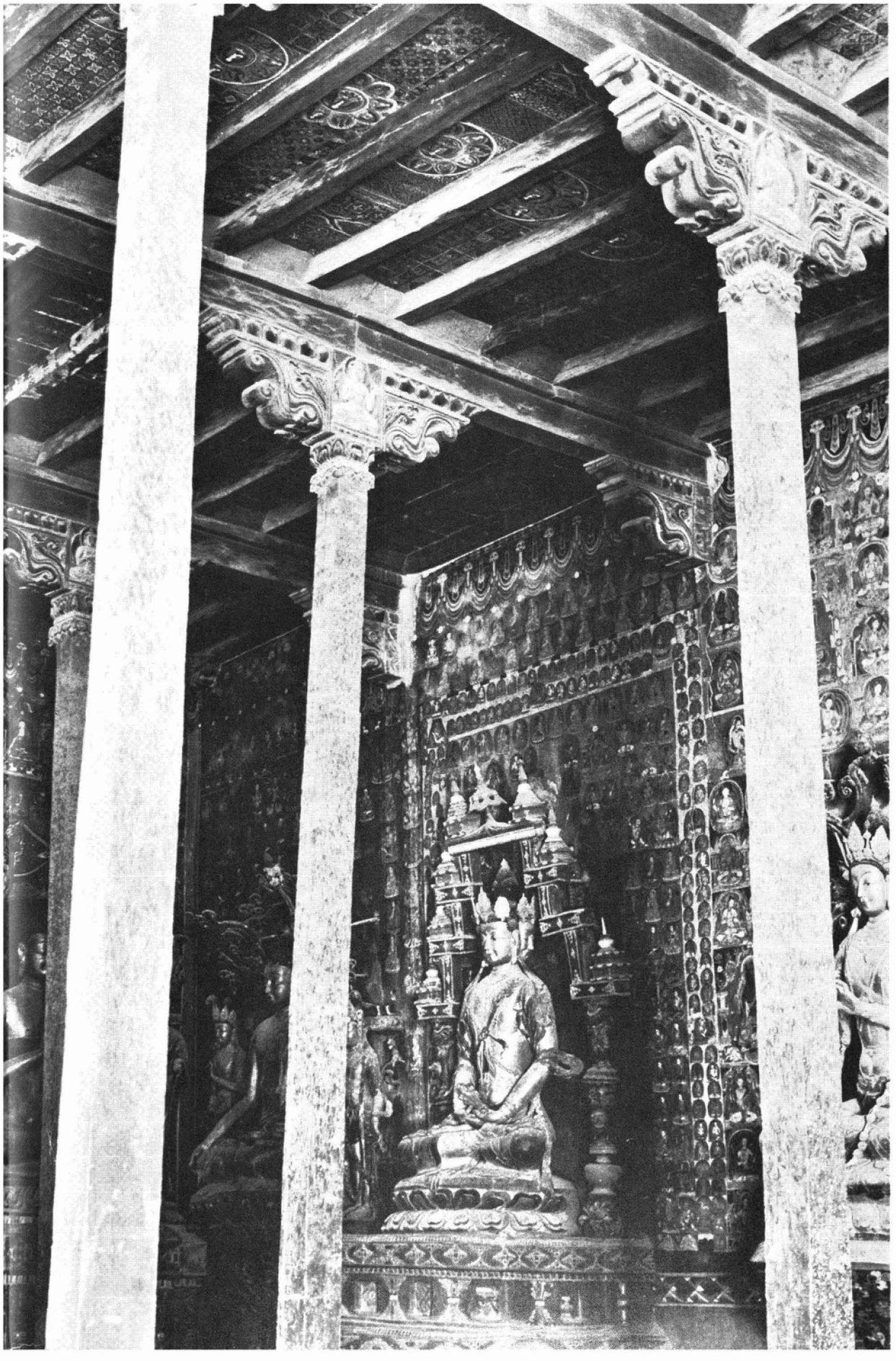
Avalokiteśvara is the active aspect of Buddha Amitābha (Buddha of Infinite Light), and the embodiment of his compassion. He appears in different forms, with two arms, four arms, or a thousand arms which are usually arranged like a halo around his white body, and symbolize his readiness to help all living beings who call upon him. The most popular Tibetan form of Avalokiteśvara is the one with four arms depicted here. The two central hands hold the jewel (*maṇi*) that is referred to in his mantra, OM MAṆI PADME HŪM. The left back hand holds a flower, while the right back hand holds a rosary. It is believed that Avalokiteśvara, the Compassionate One, looking down upon the misery and suffering of the world, shed a tear of compassion, out of which was born the merciful Tārā or Dolma, the Savioress. In China and Japan, Avalokiteśvara is generally depicted as a female, called Kwanyin in China, and Kannon in Japan. In Tibet, Avalokiteśvara, the patron saint, is known as Chenrezig.

FORM OF TĀRĀ,
PARTIALLY DESTROYED
White Temple, Tsaparang

As can be seen, the throne is already destroyed by leaking rainwater and melting snows. Unfortunately, water damage had marred most of the beautiful temples of Tsaparang.

VAJRAPĀṆI, DEFENDER OF THE DHARMA
White Temple, Tsaparang

He guards the entrance of the White Temple of Tsaparang. Dark blue in color, fierce, larger than life-size, he is the guardian of the mysteries of higher knowledge, and wielder of the Diamond Scepter. He is one of the most important wrathful deities. Vajrapāṇi appears also in a peaceful form, under the same name.

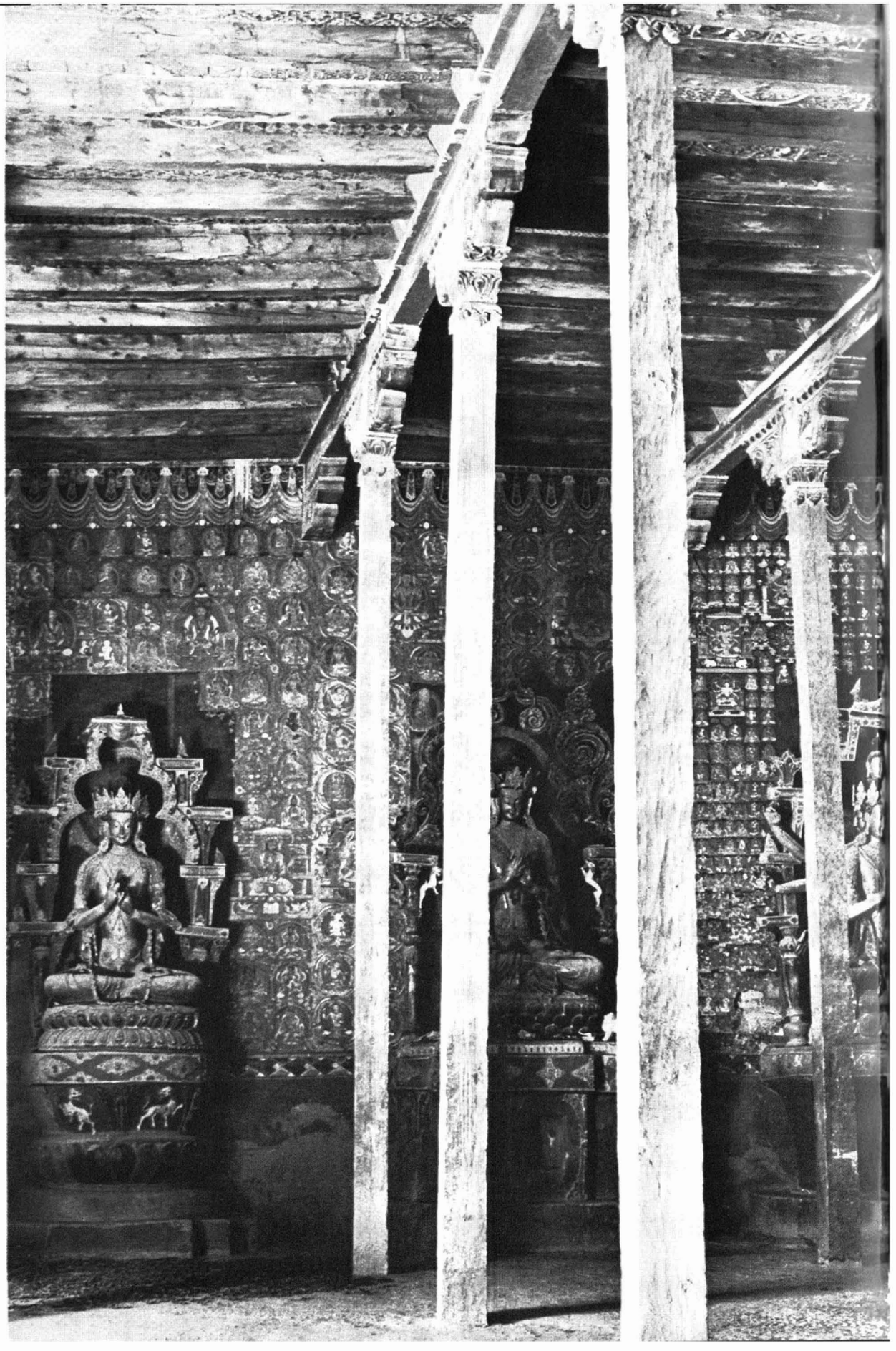


THE INTERIOR OF THE WHITE TEMPLE
White Temple, Tsaparang

The White Temple (Lhakang Karpo), which was built by Rinchen Zangpo (958–1055 A.D.) near the end of his life, is the oldest of the temples of Tsaparang. This picture shows just a small corner of this magnificently decorated and frescoed temple.

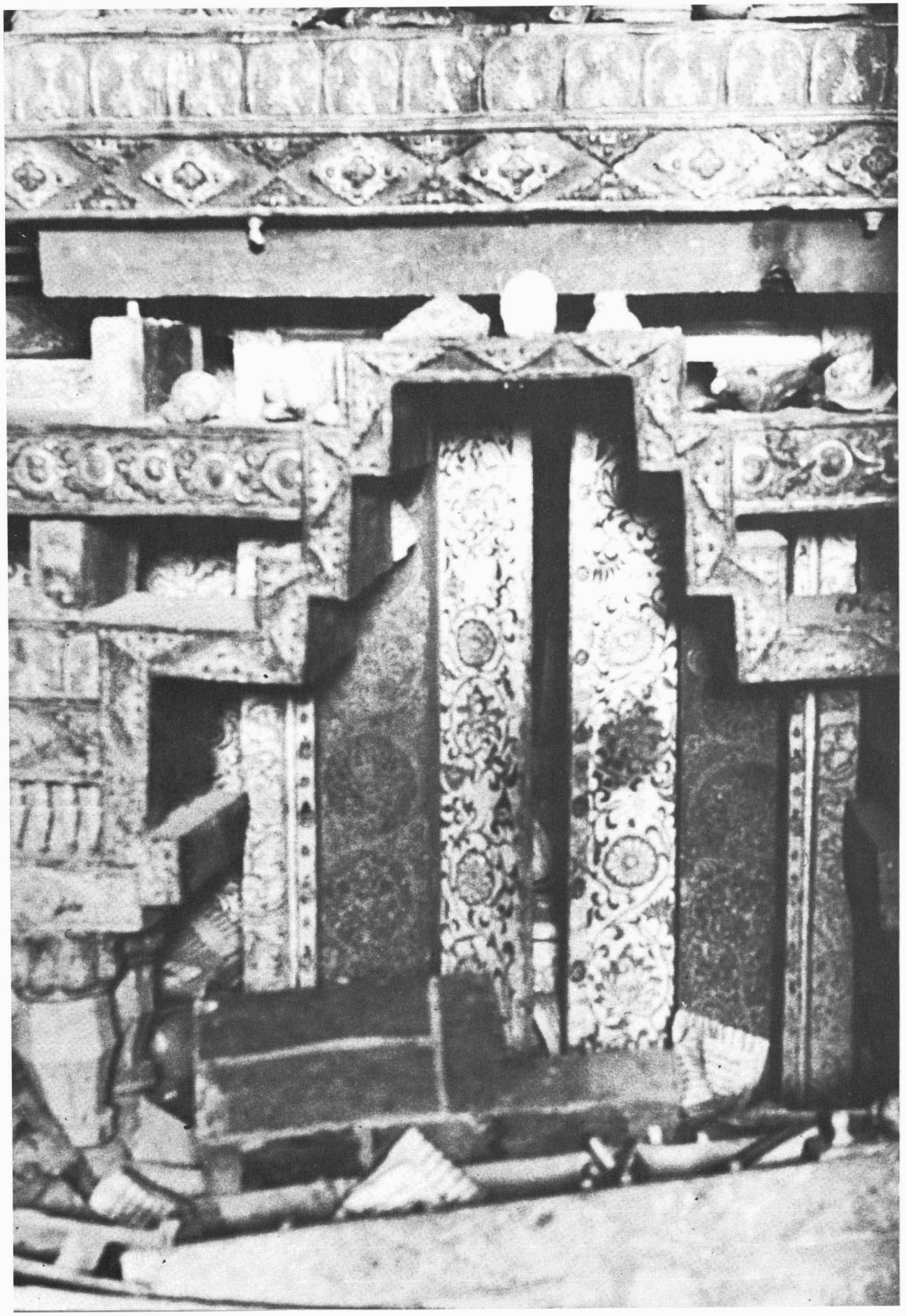
Corner Of The Interior
White Temple, Tsaparang

As can be seen from the picture, every square inch around each main statue in the White Temple is painted and covered with intricate frescoes. The characteristically elongated waists of these larger than life-sized statues add to their grace and regal beauty. The ceiling, brackets, and pillars are richly decorated with brightly colored designs and carvings.



LOTSAWA RINCHEN ZANGPO
White Temple, Tsaparang

Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo, the tenth century scholar, translator, artist, and builder was, like Michelangelo, a many-sided genius. ('Lotsawa' means the 'translator of sacred texts'.) The White Temple of Tsaparang and many other temples, as well as one hundred and eight *chortens*, are ascribed to him. Here he wears the dress of a monk, and is accompanied by two monks. He is distinguished from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas by his shaven head. At the bottom of his throne is carved the symbol of a jewel (*rinchen*) with peacocks on either side. In the decorative halo over his head is Garuḍa, the protector of Buddhas and Dhyāni-Buddhas, with outspread wings and the traditional snake in his beak.



ENTRANCE TO THE
DEMCHOG MANDALA
Demchog Temple, Tsaparang

Demchog represents one of the heroic aspects of Vajrayana Buddhism, and is called Mahāsukha ('the great happiness') in Sanskrit. His mandala was housed in a special temple on the nearly inaccessible rock-hill of Tsaparang. Here also palaces of kings had been built.

YAMĀNTAKA
Tholing, Western Tibet

Yamāntaka, the Slayer of Death, is the wrathful form of Mañjuśrī, the embodiment of Transcendental Knowledge and the peaceful Lord of Wisdom and Learning. He defies the animal nature of death. Here he is depicted as a gigantic monster whose lower and main head is that of a bull. Many other heads of demons and gods (not seen in the picture) protrude above the bull's head, but only the topmost is the head of Mañjuśrī. His transcendental knowledge overcomes the power of death. *Khatas* thrown by devotees hang from the top.

PEKAR GOMPA
Western Tibet

Like many other temples in Tibet, this one, too, was built on top of a steep hill. Small monastic communities usually possessed little or no land, and depended for food and other essential supplies on nearby residents. Monasteries thus developed close ties with neighboring villages, each providing important mutual services to the other. Monasteries nurtured the religious, educational, and cultural climate of the community, and laymen in turn supported the monks with gifts of food and other necessities.

Trek Over The Frozen Langchen Khambab River
Western Tibet

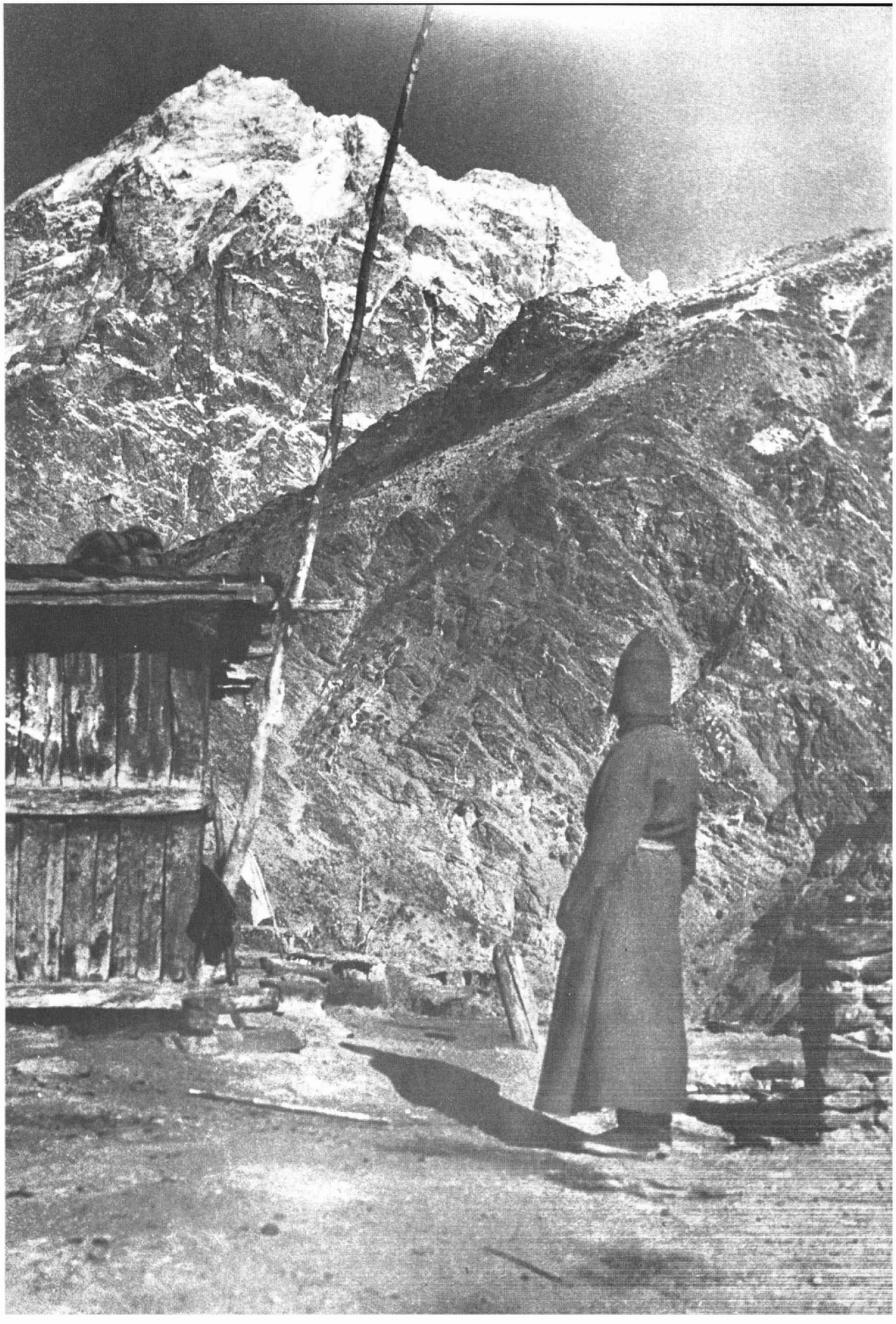
The Langchen Khambab is one of four rivers that have their source near Mount Kailash, and radiate like spokes from the hub of a wheel toward the east, west, northwest, and south. The Langchen Khambab, whose name means 'the river that flows out of an elephant's mouth', has its source in the west. In India, this river is called the Sutlej. Our porters are seen trekking over the ice in the top left-hand corner, and at bottom right.

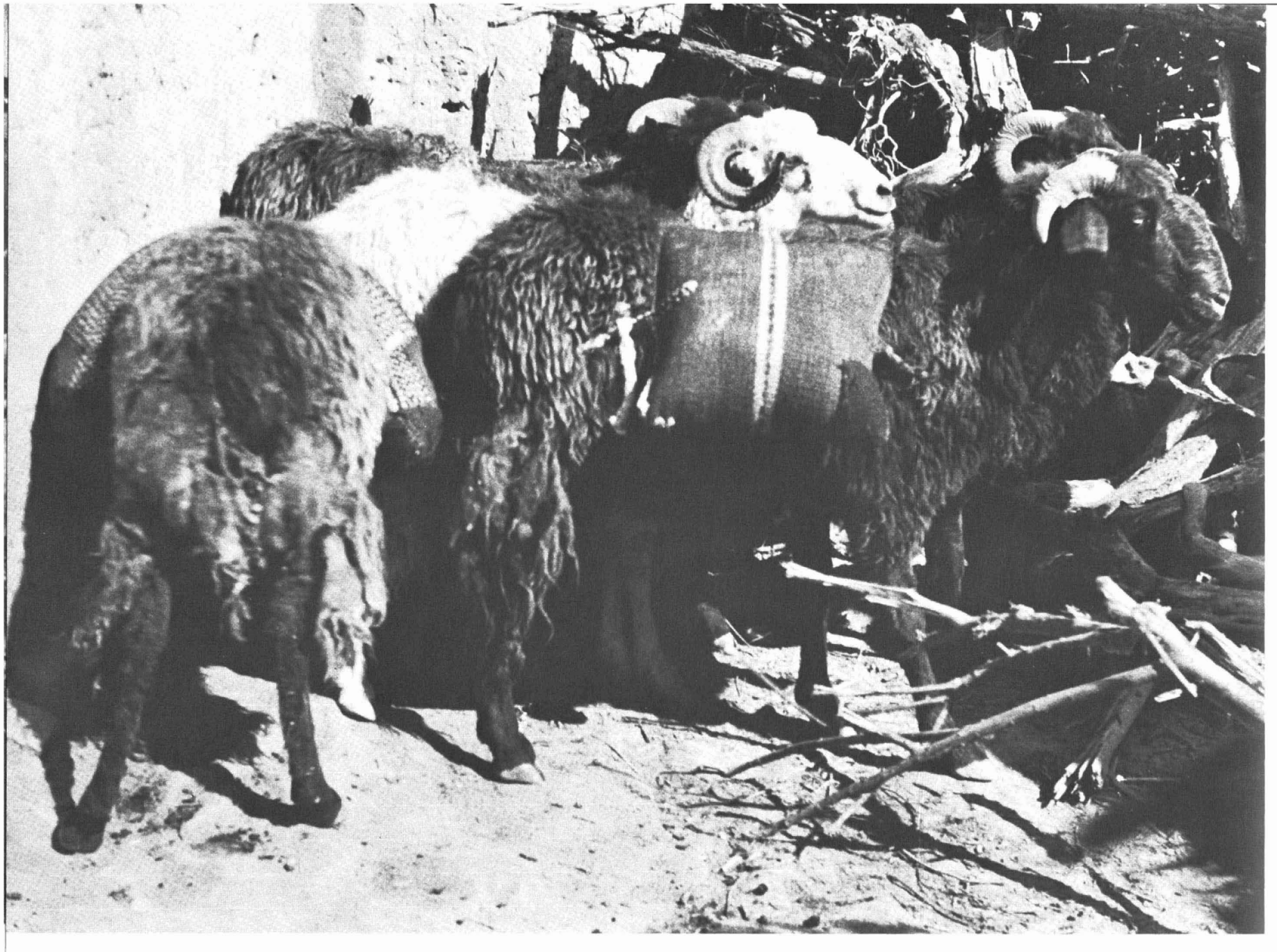
Caravan Route Near Sirkiuk
Western Tibet

At high altitudes, the mountains are always covered with ice or snow, and dazzle like jewels against the deep blue color of the Tibetan sky. The unusual clarity of the atmosphere allows one to see several days' journey ahead, like in an infrared photograph. In the cold but dry climate, traveling is not uncomfortable from dawn to noon, but during winter afternoons when the wind rises, the cold becomes acute, and it is customary to make camp and rest until the following dawn.

LEU PURGYAL FROM KIUK
Western Tibet

This was the last village in Tibet before the Shipki-la, the pass to India. Prayer flags inscribed with sacred mantras are fluttering on the staff. The altitude here is about twelve thousand feet above sea level, low enough for trees to supply wood for building. Lama Govinda faces towards Mount Leu Purgyal, which forms the border between India and Tibet.





Sheep Carrying Salt
Tholing Monastery, Western Tibet

Since the wheel was not used for vehicles in Tibet, there were no roads and no carts or wagons. Goods were transported from one place to another by pack animals such as sheep, yak, horses, or ponies. One of the main means of transporting salt was by flocks of sheep. Each animal carried two small bags, which were securely fastened to each side of its back.

TIBETAN PEASANT WOMEN OF RILDIGANG
Western Tibet

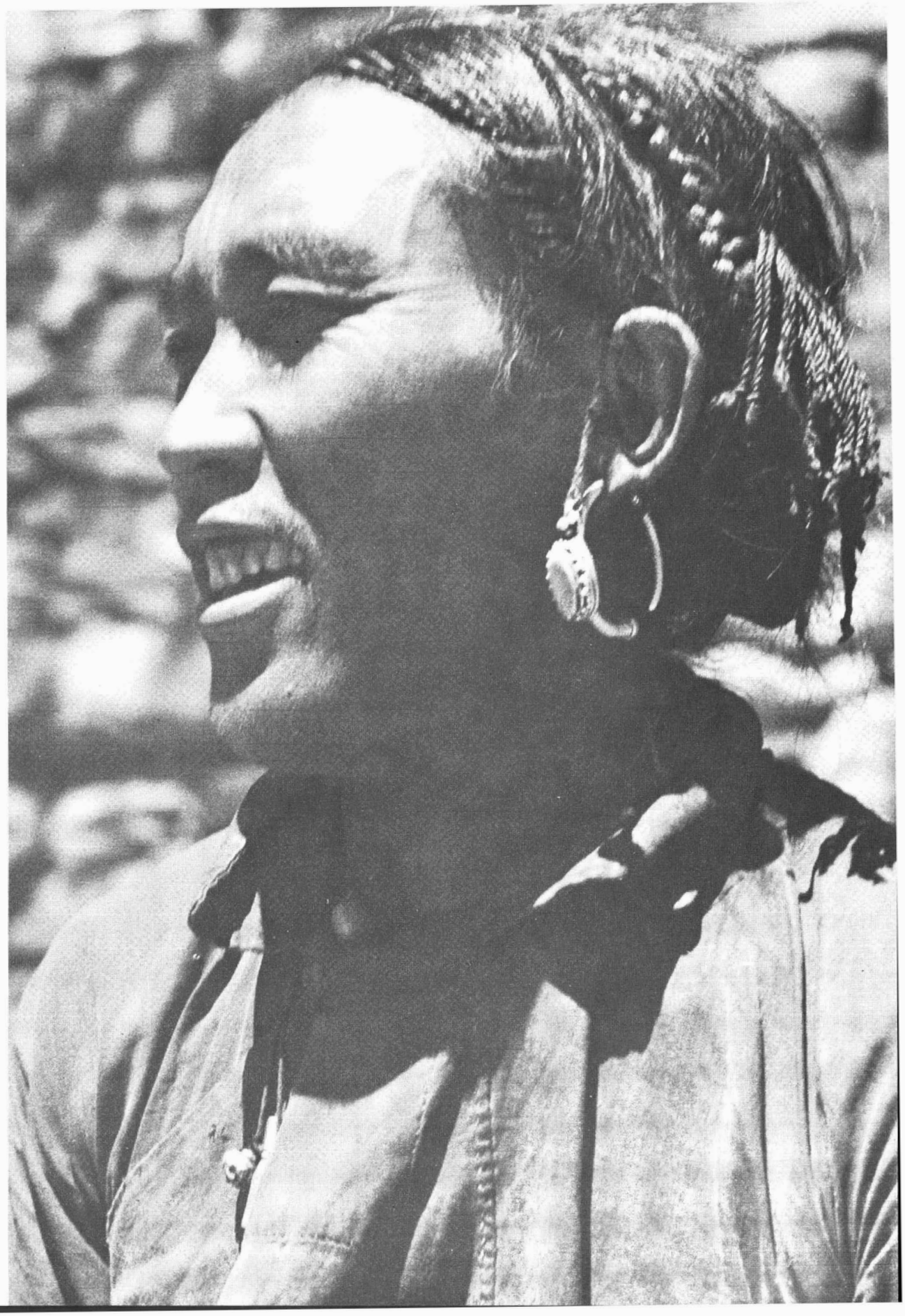
Their hair is plaited in the traditional one hundred and eight tiny plaits. They are fond of wearing ornaments of turquoise stones and coral beads in addition to their silver *khows* (charm-boxes). Tibetan peasant women are extremely hardy, and work for long hours in the fields, while their children are taken care of at home by older relatives.

THE AUTHOR ON YAK
AT SHIPKI PASS
Western Tibet

This pass, at an altitude of eleven thousand five hundred feet, separates India from Tibet. The man is our faithful servant Sherab. Both a pack and a riding animal, the yak was sure-footed on even the roughest and steepest paths. Yaks find their own food, through grazing, refusing food from human hands.

Our Servant,
The Faithful Sherab
Himachal Pradesh, India

Sherab, who was from Western Tibet, left us at Poo. He wept bitter tears when we said goodbye. He was afraid to come down to lower altitudes, for fear of becoming ill. From Poo downwards, we missed him greatly. Like most Tibetan men, he wore his hair long, with a plait wound once around his head, and wore an earring in one ear.

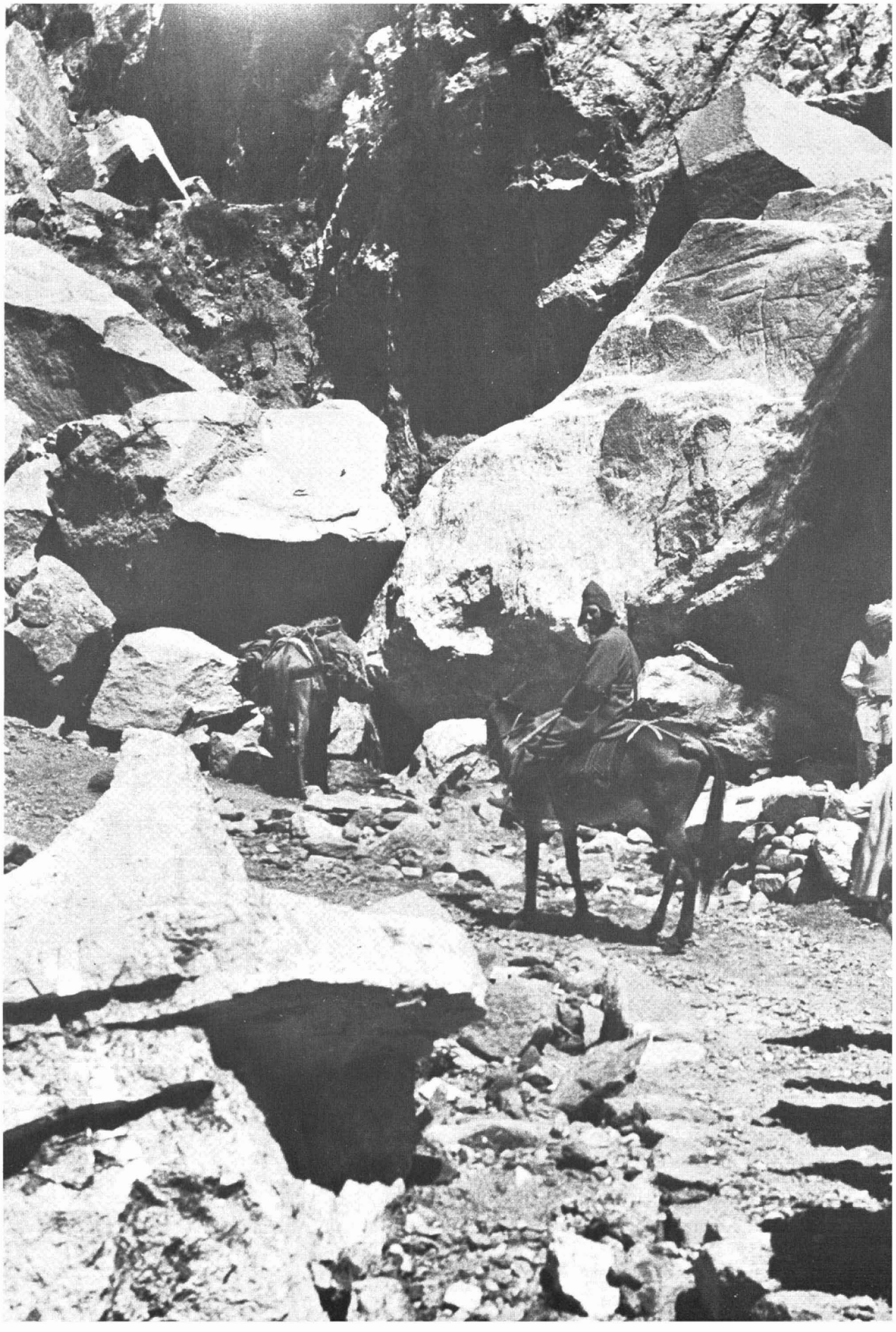


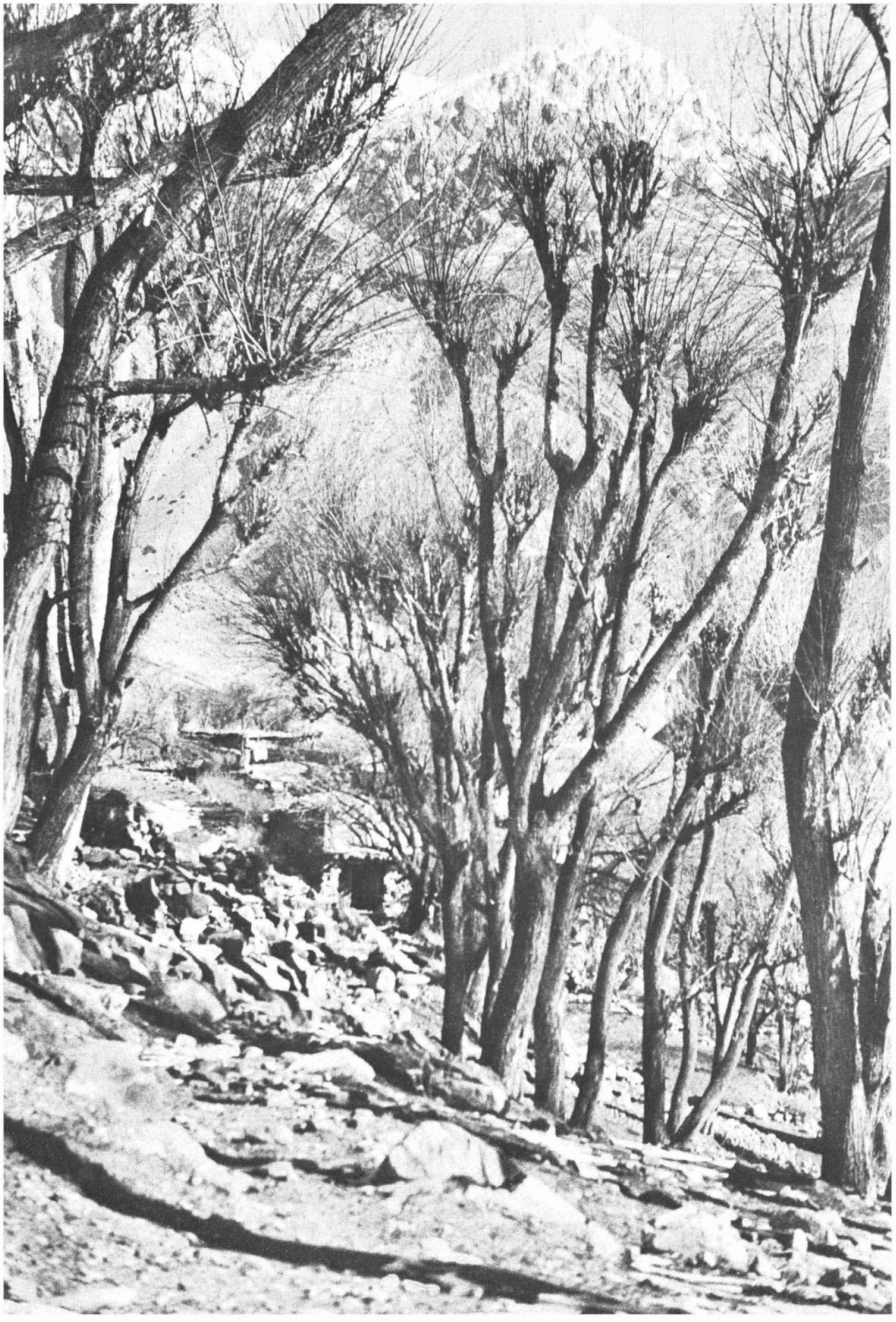
NAKLI KAILASH FROM CHINI
Himachal Pradesh

Nakli means imitation. This mountain is regarded as a substitute for Mount Kailash in Western Tibet. All those who cannot afford to make the long journey, either on account of poverty or because of ill-health, circumambulate this mountain just as reverentially as they would the real Mount Kailash.

LAMA GOVINDA NEAR
FALLEN ROCKS
Himachal Pradesh

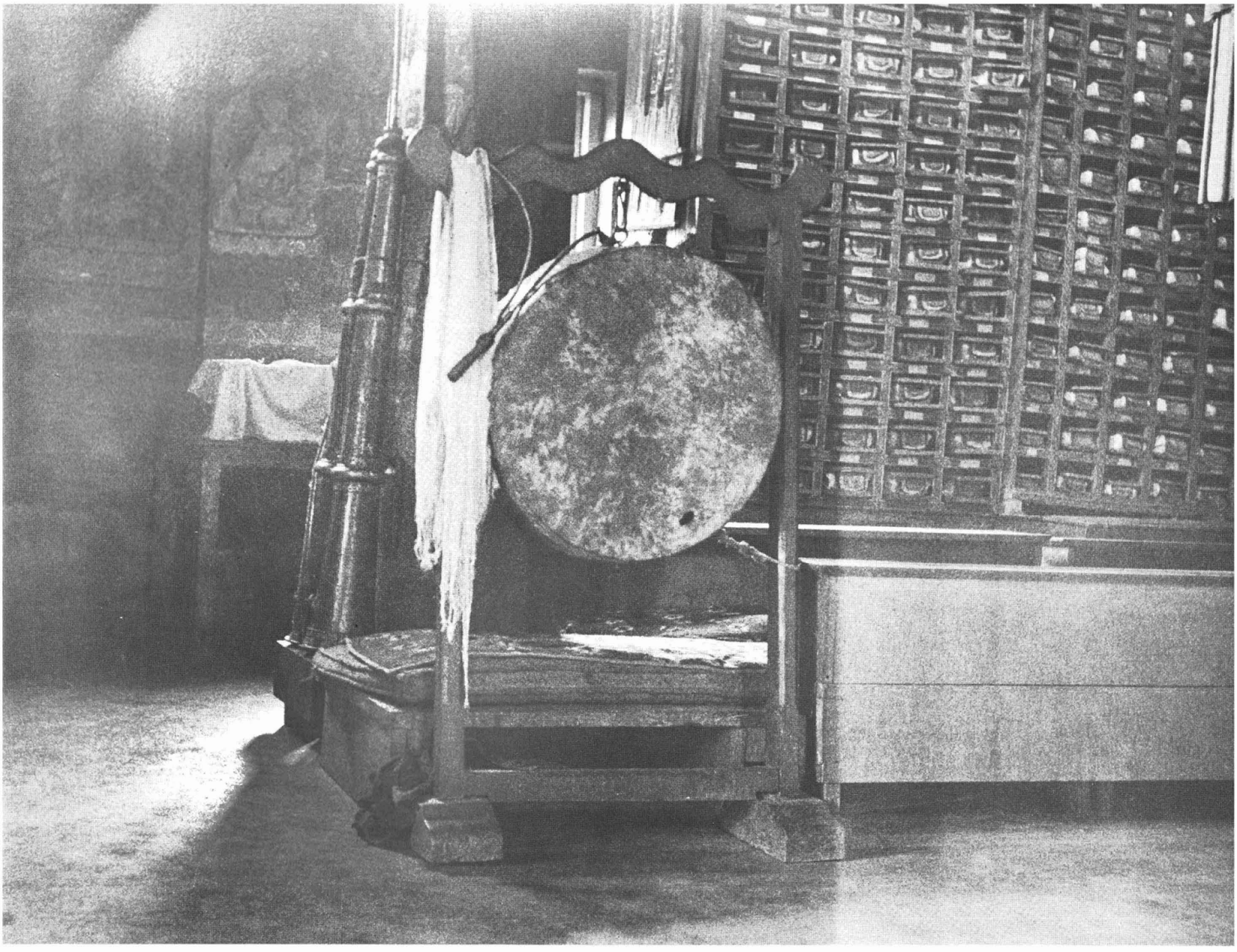
One comes across similar scenery quite frequently in Tibet, for the caravan routes often lie in rugged territory. Since the Tibetans do not use the wheel for travel, there are no roads, only paths and trails.





Poplars Of Poo
Himachal Pradesh

Namgyal and Poo are the two villages located just after the Shipki Pass that divides Tibet and India. Although Poo was geographically in Tibet, it was politically Indian, for it had been exchanged, some years before, by the two governments. It looked like any other Tibetan village, and the people spoke Tibetan, practiced Buddhism, and moved freely back and forth across the border. Poo is rich not only in poplars, but also in apricot trees. Apricot oil, which the Poo-pas use for cooking, has an excellent taste, and many healthful benefits.

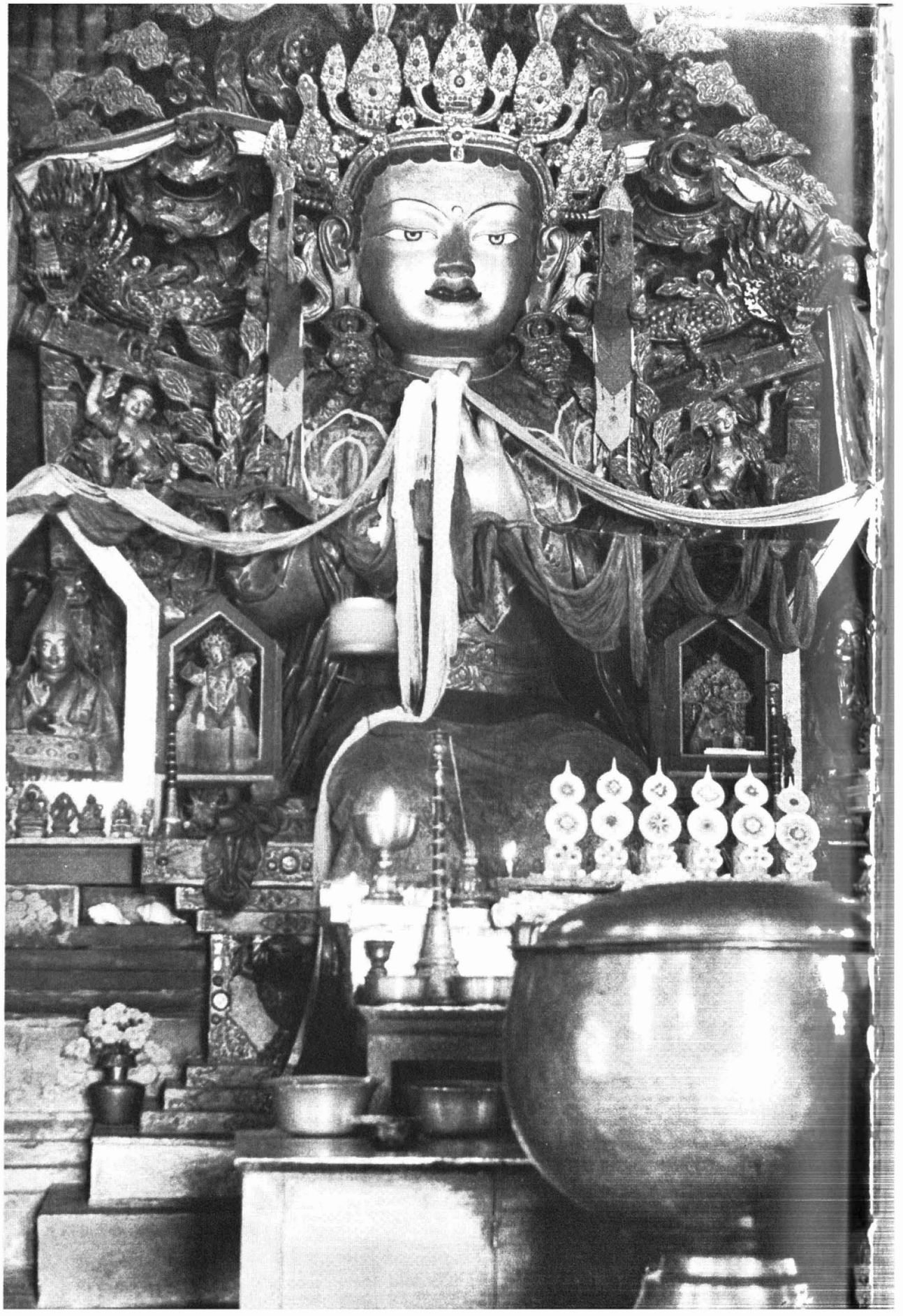


TEMPLE DRUM AND SACRED BOOKS
Yiga Choling Monastery, Ghoom, India

These drums are used for services, chanting, and the recitation of sacred texts. The two long trumpets nearby are *radongs*, which are usually about twelve feet long. When not in use, they are telescoped to make for easier handling. When used, they are pulled out and blown vigorously to announce services to devotees in neighboring villages. Their sound can be heard at great distances. To the right is a corner of the library of religious books.

BUDDHA MAITREYA
Yiga Choling Monastery

Maitreya, the coming Buddha, is the main image of Yiga Choling Monastery, near Ghoom. This monastery was the seat of Tomo Geshe Rimpoche (Ngawang Kalzang) whenever he came to India from Tibet. In the foreground is an eternally burning butter lamp. Above it stand six *tormas* (decorated cake-offerings), made of red-brown colored *tsampa*. The white scarves are *khatas* thrown over the image by devotees. This huge image is two stories high.



HEAD OF MAITREYA BUDDHA
Yiga Choling Monastery

The square black stone set in the forehead of this image of Maitreya, just below the crown, is the stone held by Tomo Geshe Rimpoche (Ngawang Kalzang) during his meditations. It is to be noted that images of Buddhas are always shown with blue eyes. In a country where all have dark eyes, blue eyes are regarded as a sign of an exceptional being. How this belief started is not known; it goes back to the earliest time of Buddhism in India.

THOUSAND ARMED AVALOKITEŚVARA
Yiga Choling Monastery

Avalokiteśvara (called Chenrezig by Tibetans) wanted to help the whole world, but could not do so with only two arms and one head. He therefore burst into a thousand arms and a thousand heads, of which only eleven are shown as a symbolic substitute for one thousand. The uppermost head is that of Amitābha, of whom he is an emanation.

IMAGE OF TOMO GESHE RIMPOCHE (NGAWANG KALZANG)
Yiga Choling Monastery

Tomo Geshe Rimpoche (Ngawang Kalzang) was a learned abbot of Dungkar Gompa, a Gelugpa monastery in the Tomo Valley of Southern Tibet. He became our first guru, and after his passing away, we had the good fortune to meet other great gurus belonging to the Nyingma, Sakya, and Kargyud sects. We therefore feel great affinity with all forms of Tibetan Buddhism.

ALTAR OF OFFERINGS AND LIBRARY OF SACRED BOOKS
Yiga Choling Monastery

Twice seven water bowls, *tormas* (offering cakes), and butter lamps constitute the main offering. The two small oboes are used during special ceremonies. In the background are sacred books, each in its own place. Books in Tibet were not bound, but were composed of loose sheets held between wooden boards. When not in use, they were carefully wrapped in cloth, with yellow labels in front, and put away. To print sacred books, as well as prayer flags, each large monastery developed its own wood block printing facility, although Derge in Eastern Tibet, and Narthang in Central Tibet became two main printing establishments. These monasteries stored thousands of wood blocks, ready to print to order.

THE SEAT OF
TOMO GESHE RIMPOCHE
Yiga Choling Monastery

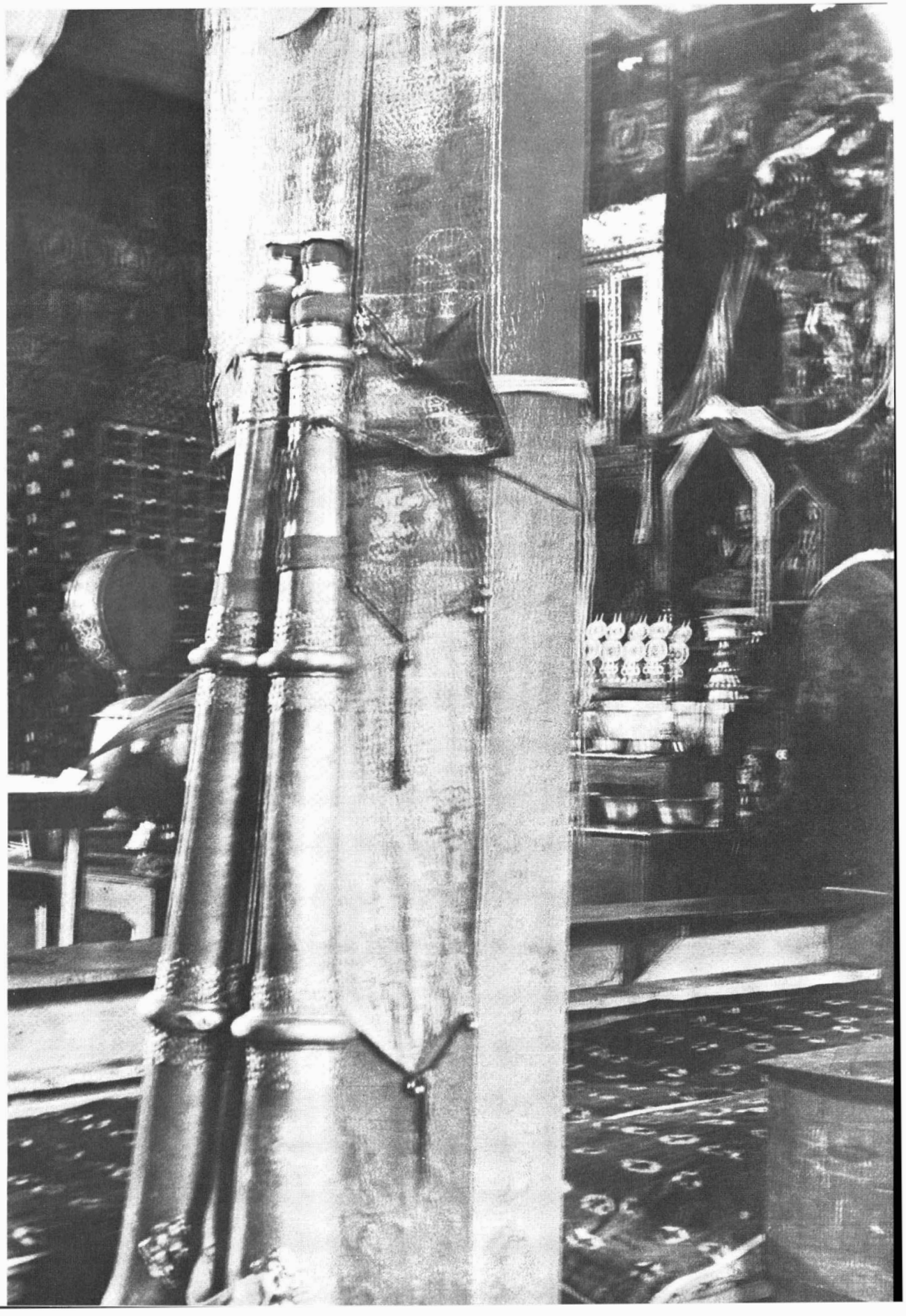
This seat was used by Tomo Geshe Rimpoche whenever he entered the temple at Yiga Choling Monastery. His teacup is kept filled, and his robes are kept folded on the seat, which only he or his reincarnation is allowed to occupy. The white lion with the green mane, which is pictured on the base of the seat, is the heraldic animal of Tibet.

Corner Of Yiga Choling Temple Hall
Yiga Choling Monastery

To the right is the library of sacred Buddhist scriptures: the *Kanjur* (canon in one hundred and two volumes) and the *Tanjur* (commentaries in two hundred and fourteen volumes). Most of these scriptural canons were translated from the Sanskrit into Tibetan during the Golden Age of Padmasambhava, in the eighth century, and later by Rinchen Zangpo, Atīśa, and others.

Tibetan Temple Horns
Yiga Choling Monastery

When these trumpets are pulled out to their full length of ten to twelve feet and blown, they are held up either by wooden supports or by one or two monks. They are made of copper or brass, and have a very deep sound that can be heard for miles. Their sound imitates rolling thunder.



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Glossary

abhaya mudrā. The gesture of fearlessness and blessing.

Akṣobhya. The Dhyāni-Buddha who embodies the mirrorlike wisdom that reflects all forms as they are, and leads to the realization of their transcendental nature.

Amitābha. The Dhyāni-Buddha of Infinite Light whose position in the mandala of meditation is in the West.

Amoghasiddhi. The Dhyāni-Buddha who embodies the Wisdom that Accomplishes All Works. He occupies the Northern position in the meditation mandala; his gesture is that of fearlessness and blessing. (See *abhaya mudrā*.)

Avalokiteśvara. The great Bodhisattva of compassion and mercy, the patron saint of Tibet, known as Chenrezig.

bhūmisparsa mudrā. The gesture of touching the earth as witness.

bodhagri mudrā. The gesture of oneness, the merging of the mundane and the supramundane.

Bodhisattva. An Enlightenment-Being who, out of great wisdom and compassion, has chosen to be reborn in this world in order to work for the enlightenment of all sentient beings.

bodhi-tse. Seeds used for making prayer-beads or rosaries.

Bon. The pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, a shamanistic nature cult.

chang. Tibetan beer, made from fermented barley.

choktse. A low wooden table used for meals, tea, etc.

chorten. A religious monument derived from the Indian *stūpa*, originally built as a reliquary. It came to represent the universe in Buddhist cosmology.

chupa or *baku*. A coat-dress worn by Tibetans.

cozen. A fine silk brocade worn by Tibetan men and women alike.

dacoit. A bandit.

dāna mudrā. The gesture of giving that expresses the Wisdom of the Essential Equality of All Beings.

dharmacakra pravartana mudrā. The gesture of Turning the Wheel of the Universal Law, the activation of the physical and moral law symbolized by the Buddha Śākyamuni's first sermon at Sarnath, near Benares.

Dharmavijāya. She represents the victory of the Dharma, the universal and moral law preached by the Buddhas, over the forces of ignorance that try to prevent ultimate liberation.

dhyāna mudrā. The gesture of meditation.

Dhyāni-Buddha. Non-historical Buddhas of meditation who symbolize certain virtues and meditative experiences.

Garuḍa. The eagle-headed protector of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, usually shown with his natural enemy, the snake, in his beak.

Gelugpa school. Founded by Tsongkhapa in the fifteenth century, this sect emphasized the 'Middle Path' (Mādhyamika), the doctrines of the perfection of knowledge (Prajñāpāramitā), and increasing attention to monastic discipline. The Gelugpa sect held political power in Tibet.

ghaṇṭa. The ritual Bell that symbolizes awakened wisdom.

gompa. A monastery, a place of religious practice and learning. Except within the Gelugpa sect, which practiced celibacy, monastic communities included families.

Jātaka tales. Stories of the past lives of the Buddha Śākyamuni, often acted out in plays performed in monasteries.

Kadampa school. The forerunners of the Gelugpas.

Kanjur. The sacred writings that record the word of the Buddha, in one hundred and two volumes.

Kargyudpa school. Founded by Marpa Lotsawa in the eleventh century.

khata. A white gauze scarf symbolizing a flower-garland, used as an offering of devotion and reverence.

khow. A small decorative box filled with mantras, blessings for protection, charms, and other religious things, worn as a pendant by most Tibetan women. Tibetan men usually wear them while traveling.

lhabab. A style of *chorten*, with stairways in its upper structure symbolizing the descent of the Buddha from Tavatimsa Heaven, where he taught the Dharma to his mother, who had died shortly after his birth.

Lhabrangtse. The Gelugpa monk-official appointed by the Tibetan government to be the Governor of the Monastic City of Gyantse.

Mahākāla. One of the fearful protectors of the Buddhist faith.

Maitreya. The Buddha of the coming age, who symbolizes love for all sentient beings, and is therefore called 'The Loving One'.

Mañjuśrī. The Bodhisattva of Learning and Wisdom.

Māra. The Evil One, who tries to turn Buddha Śākyamuni

away from enlightenment towards the world of illusion, samsara.

Milarepa. The beloved poet-saint of Tibet, famous through his Hundred Thousand Songs. He was a pupil of Marpa, the founder of the Kargyud school.

Nyingma school. The oldest Buddhist tradition in Tibet.

parikrama. The path of ritual circumambulation.

parinirvāṇa. Final Nirvana, without rebirth.

parshing. Hand-carved wood blocks used for printing the sacred Buddhist scriptures.

Prajñāpāramitā. The transcendental wisdom called the Mother of all Buddhas; the sacred scriptures of Mahāyāna Buddhism, embodied in Yumchenmo.

pūja. Ceremony of devotion, performed daily at all Tibetan monasteries, temples, and at private homes too.

radong. A copper or brass trumpet approximately twelve feet long, used in Tibetan religious ceremonies.

Ratnasambhava. The Dhyāni-Buddha who embodies the Wisdom of the Essential Equality of all Beings. He occupies the Southern position in the meditation mandala; his gesture is that of giving. (See *dāna mudrā*.)

repa. A title meaning 'cotton-clad', given to those who follow the path of Milarepa.

rinchen. Jewel.

Śākyamuni. The historical Buddha of our era.

Sakya school. Derived from Sakya Gompa, formally the seat of the ruling power of Tibet.

Sambhogakāya. The body of spiritual bliss.

Sayum. The Earth goddess, from *sa* meaning earth, and *yum*, an honorific term meaning mother.

soecha. Tibetan tea (*cha*), usually churned with yak butter, salt, and soda.

siddha. One of the 'perfected ones' who lived in India primarily from the sixth to the tenth centuries, and in Tibet after Buddhism was established there in the eighth century.

stūpa. A tumuluslike structure in which the relics of the historical Buddha were originally enshrined. (See *chorten*.)

Sūtras. The direct teachings of the Buddha, which formed the bases of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Tanjur. The commentaries by Buddhist masters on the teachings of the Buddha, in two hundred and fourteen volumes.

Tārā. The Madonna of Tibetan Buddhism, said to be born from a tear of compassion shed by Avalokiteśvara when he looked down upon the world and saw its suffering.

thanka. Religious scroll painting.

torma. Cone-shaped offering cakes made of roasted barley-flour and butter, and decorated with flowers and colored butter, and sometimes with paper and cardboard symbols.

tsampa. Barley roasted whole and ground into flour, the staple food of Tibet.

tsang-khang. Solitary meditation retreats practiced by members of various Buddhist sects.

tulku. A recognized reincarnation.

tumo. A practice generating intense psychic heat.

ūrṇa. The third eye, designated in Tibetan sculpture by a raised dot between the eyes.

Vairocana. The radiating Sun Buddha who sits in the center of the meditation mandala, the pure sphere of consciousness or the realm of the Dharma (law). He is generally depicted in the gesture of Turning the Wheel of the Universal Law.

vajra. The Diamond Scepter, which symbolizes the power to actively realize the means of compassion.

Vajrapāṇi. The defender of the Dharma, one of the most important wrathful Buddha forms.

Vajrasattva. The Dhyāni-Buddha whose name means the Diamond Being, i.e. the nature of the mind that is hidden beneath the illusion of egohood.

Yamāntaka. The Slayer of Death, the wrathful form of Mañjuśrī, the embodiment of Transcendental Wisdom.

Yama Rāja. He executes the law of karma, making visible to the dead the totality of their past actions in the mirror of karma. He also represents human conscience.

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About the Author

Painting by Magda Nachmann, 1947

Li Gotami was born in India into an aristocratic Bombay family, and during her childhood and youth, lacked nothing in the way of material comfort and social standing. Her early education included instruction at Harrow-on-the-Hill in Middlesex, England, 'finishing school' in Paris, and travels in France, Switzerland, Alsace-Lorraine, and parts of Germany.

From the start her desire was to be an artist, and it was not seldom during her childhood that she was severely spanked for spoiling the walls of their home with pencil and crayon sketches of Mother, Father, Dog, Sister, Brother, Horse, Ayah, etc. When spanked, she would console herself by saying under her tears: "One thing is certain—I was born in the *wrong* house!"

In 1924, her intended art education at The Slade School of Art in London was cut short by ill-health, and she returned to India where she attended college and studied art with local teachers for some time. She was one of the founder-members of the well-known Camera Pictorialists of Bombay, and won several plaques, certificates, and awards in exhibitions all over the world, among them being a diploma awarded for Exceptional Photographic Art at 'The Century of Progress Exhibition and World's Fair' at Chicago in 1933. In the same year she was also awarded the A.R.P.S. (Associate of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain).

In addition to these activities, she studied ballet, eurythmics, and stagecraft for five years at the Astrova Academy of Russian Dance-Arts. After gaining the highest award of the Academy, and still feeling dissatisfied, she threw all this away, and in 1934, went to poet Rabindranath Tagore's International University, Santiniketan, in Bengal, to study Indian art under Nandalal Bose, and Manipuri dancing under Manipuri teachers. She remained at Santiniketan for twelve years and gained diplomas in both of these subjects.

In 1942, she met Abanindranath Tagore (the great Art Master of India) at Santiniketan. He took an instant liking for her, and made her his personal pupil. "I think I can *do* something with you," he said, and after thoroughly instructing her in all matters of art for several years—and more important than that, after readjusting her entire outlook on art and on life in general—he gave her the right push in the right direction. "Paint Tibetan pictures, or write and illustrate fantasies and children's books," he said. "In these you will shine."

In 1947, Li Gotami married Lama Anagarika Govinda (whom she had met at Santiniketan and known for thirteen years), openly declared her hitherto secret faith in Buddhism,

and with Lama Govinda, traveled to Tibet. She was the first (and perhaps only) non-Tibetan woman permitted to live in Tibetan monasteries of the strictly celibate Gelugpa sects, and given permission to photograph, sketch, and study monastic life in all its aspects. She, as well as her husband, was also uniquely honored in being permitted to trace priceless frescoes directly off monastic walls, an activity never before allowed in Tibet.

In 1948, Li Gotami and Lama Govinda traveled again to Tibet, their destination Tsaparang, the ancient capital of the Guge dynasty in Western Tibet. From Tsaparang, as her part of the expedition work, Li Gotami brought back hundreds of photographs and first-hand tracings of eleventh-century frescoes. The most important of the fresco tracings by Li Gotami was a set of thirty-two panels depicting the life of Śākyamuni Buddha. Three of these panels, finished in color, now hang in the Tibetan section of the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay.

In 1949 Li Gotami and Lama Govinda returned to India and completed a part of the valuable material from the Tsaparang expedition, which was published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. Additional material was published in *The Weekly* over a period of five to six years.

Since then, Li Gotami and Lama Govinda have traveled several times to Europe and America, attending conferences and giving lectures at various universities. In 1973, Li Gotami held a solo exhibition of her photographs in Dallas, Texas, where a number of the pictures included in these volumes were shown. In 1978, the Govindas held exhibitions in Bonn, Germany and Basle, Switzerland, where some of the expedition material was also shown.

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